

**WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN SOUTH KOREA: EXPERIENCES OF THE HIGHLY
EDUCATED AND MARRIED FEMALE KOREAN EMPLOYEES WITH FLEXIBLE
WORKPLACE ARRANGEMENTS**

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

South Korea is known as a country with a large number of highly educated women; however, it is also known as one with the lowest employment rate of female college graduates among the OECD nations. Underlying the low employment rate of women, there is a phenomenon of a high rate of career-interrupted Korean women, defined as women who have experienced a career break due to marriage, pregnancy, childbirth, and family responsibilities. As a result of unfair treatment at work and home, more married female professionals hesitate to have children. This is evidenced by the low birth rate in South Korea (1.19 children per woman), which is nearly the lowest in fertility worldwide. Recently, to address the critical needs of a nation and the individuals' quality of work and life, work-life balance (WLB) and women/family-friendly practices such as flexible workplace arrangements (FWA) have been promoted in Korea at a national level. Given the "newness" of FWA, few studies have been conducted to examine this alternative strategy.

With this background knowledge, the purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of the highly educated and married female Korean employees (HEMFE) with WLB and the influence of FWA on their WLB. To accomplish this goal, I conducted phenomenological interviews with sixteen married Korean female employees with higher education who had experienced FWA. As a result of the data analysis I identified a number of the superordinate and subthemes about the participants' experiences with WLB, FWA, and the impact of FWA on their WLB. Regarding the women's experiences with WLB, six superordinate themes were drawn: (a) the meaning of work-life balance, (b) support systems, (c) career aspiration: "thin and long," (d) concerns, (e) WLB strategies, and (f) hope: expectations for future.

In terms of the women's experiences with FWA and its influence on their WLB, they reported mixed experiences: positive experiences and challenges. The first superordinate theme, *positive experience*, was explicated in five categories: (a) childcare, (b) less stress, (c) job satisfaction, (d) autonomy to control work schedules, and (e) career continuity. The second superordinate theme, *challenges*, had four categories: (a) different challenges by types of FWA, (b) organizational culture, (c) job characteristics, and (d) limited FWA options. Findings from this phenomenological study provided valuable insights and practical implications regarding how to promote the quality of the professional career women's lives in the Korean context. They also shed light on a number of areas for future research.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Chapter One presents an overview of the study. This chapter introduces the background of the study, the problems identified, research purpose and questions, and the theoretical framework guiding the study. At the end of the chapter, the methodology, significance of the study, and the boundary of the study will also be briefly introduced.

Background of the Study

South Korea has a large number of highly educated people, with 40% of them aged 25-64. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2012) reported that 65% of the Korean population aged 25-34 had a college degree in 2010, compared to the average of OECD countries, 38%. Interestingly, in the same year, the most distinctive feature in educational attainment in Korea was that the percentage of female students (80.5%) who advanced to college exceeded male students (79.6%) for the first time (Korean Research Institute for Vocational Education & Training, 2012). By doing so, women (aged 25-34) with tertiary education were reported at 98% in 2010 (OECD, 2012), which reflects not only Korean women's strong desire for educational acquisition but also a new topography of highly educated labor forces in the future. Unfortunately, despite the increase of highly educated women, the employment rate of female college graduates in Korea is the lowest among OECD nations (OECD, 2012). This reveals an aspect of inefficient utilization of highly educated women, particularly from the economic perspective.

Underlying the low employment rate of women, there is a phenomenon of the high rate of career-interrupted Korean women. Career-interrupted women are defined as women

who have experienced a career break due to marriage, pregnancy, childbirth, and family responsibilities (Ministry of Gender Equality & Family, 2014). According to a survey of the Korean Ministry of Gender Equality & Family in 2013, 58% of the respondents (5,854 married women aged 25-59) have or had experienced career break for the above reasons (Ministry of Gender Equality & Family, 2014). A distinctive feature of career-interrupted women is that when the women want to reenter the labor market, they tend to be degraded to temporary workers or given lower-level jobs/positions than before (Oh, Kim, & Um, 2012). As a result, the trend of Korean women laborers is often depicted as a low rate of regular and a high rate of temporary employees despite their higher education background (Jeong, 2010).

The main causes of women's career breaks are often attributed to their traditional gender roles as a primary caregiver, and the work-centered and long working hours in Korean organizations (Oh, Kim, & Um, 2012). In Korea, female employees who work more than 40 hours per week accounted for 77%, which is the highest among OECD countries, compared to the average of 49% (Jeong, 2010). Married Korean female employees easily undergo work-life conflicts, often leading them to quit their jobs, or consider seeking a new job that can satisfy both domains, work and home (Lee, Lee, & Han, 2008). Therefore, in Korean society, to maintain their career, an increasing number of women are reluctant to get married, and when they do, they tend to delay having a child (Jeong, 2010). The birth of Gold Miss, referring to a single woman who enjoys her single life and devotes her time to self-development based on her professional job and economic power, is a native expression that well captures this phenomenon. What is worse, this social phenomenon exacerbates the low-birth rate in Korea (Jeong, 2010). It is projected that South Korea is one of the countries

that might experience serious labor shortages in 2050 because of a low fertility rate and a rapidly aging population (Seo, 2013).

To address these issues, the Korean government has resorted to the utilization of a female work force as a potential solution. A variety of support programs and policies to attract women employees have been designed at a national level; among these new initiatives, flexible workplace arrangements (FWA) have emerged as a new alternative (Oh, Kim, & Uhm, 2012). As discussed earlier, the FWA plan was initiated for the sake of the critical needs of the nation and the individuals' quality of work and life. Given its recent emergence and "newness," few studies have been conducted to examine this alternative strategy. This study was designed with this background knowledge, and it pays special attention to the experiences of the highly educated and married female employees (HEMFEs) in Korea regarding FWA and work-life balance (WLB). By doing so, this study will provide a fresh insight into the quality of the lives of HEMFEs in the Korean context.

Problem of the Study

Married women's economic participation has been considered one of the most distinctive changes in the labor market in the twentieth century (Brinton, 2001). Despite the increased number of married women in the workplace, issues associated with gender inequality at work (e.g. wage gap, glass ceiling) persist, and women's employment patterns across the life cycle (e.g. marriage, childrearing, and family-caring) remain a major concern to women's career interruption (Brinton, 2001). If the inequality in the workplace is a common issue for women employees in general, the impact on women's employment patterns across the life cycle is more salient to married women. Due to their multiple responsibilities, married women are more vulnerable compared to men and single women in

the labor market (Bae, 2010). When a woman's marital status is combined with a conservative and patriarchal culture, like South Korea, it can have a more substantial impact on women's career lives.

In Korea, as a result of unfair treatment at work and home toward married female employees, more married women hesitate to have a child. This is evidenced by the low birth rate (1.19 children per woman) as of 2014, which is nearly the lowest in fertility worldwide. Such a low birth rate has caused a serious national concern that if the current birth rate continues South Koreans might become extinct by the year 2750 (Kwak, 2014). On the other hand, a rapidly aging population is another critical issue South Korea faces. In 2013, the number of Korean people aged 65 and above comprise 11.7% of the total population and has surpassed 6 million for the first time. Regarding this dramatic demographic change, the OECD has foreseen that South Korea will be ranked as the second country worldwide with the oldest population by 2050 (Vatvani, 2013). The change of demographic composition is closely linked with the national economic growth in the long term. Because of that, the decrease of the working age population and the increase of seniors who are not actively involved with economic participation can threaten the national development of South Korea, which might even result in a national crisis (Kwak, 2014).

These situations have prompted the Korean government to investigate the underlying causes of the issues and actively seek effective solutions to address them. Work-life balance (WLB) and family-friendly practices are emerging as the main solution to attract and retain more human resources (Lee, Lee, & Han, 2008). Although work-life balance is a universal issue, it appears to be more prominent among female employees (Chandra, 2012). For example, according to the national report by the Korean Ministry of Gender Equality &

Family (2014) regarding the conditions of career-interrupted women, the number one trigger for women to quit their jobs is the failure of work-family balance (Ministry of Gender Equality & Family, 2014). This report also stated that 81.4% of the surveyed population who abandoned their jobs due to child-rearing responded that they would maintain their careers if the child problem was resolved.

With the critical needs for work-life balance, the Korean government has paid great attention to FWA practices. The primary purposes of the implementation of FWA are twofold. The short-term goal is to prevent female employees' career breaks; and the long-term goal is to change the organizational culture of long-working hours to ensure employees' quality of life (Choi, 2010; Jeong, 2010). Empirical evidence from Western countries has revealed a positive relationship between FWA and WLB (Deery, 2008; Kossek & Ozeki, 1999; Moen, Kelly & Hill, 2011). However, the positive outcomes about FWA are currently somewhat debatable in Korea. For example, some employees question if FWA would really work in the current Korean organizational culture (e.g. collectivism, long-working hours, patriarchy, etc.). Some employers hesitate to implement the new practice due to the expense (KBS, 2014).

Given that FWA was originally proposed by the Korean government, the government then needs to first recognize the perspective of each stakeholder on work-life balance and FWA. In this sense, this study aims to address the issues of FWA and WLB from the perspective of one of the main stakeholders, married female Korean workers. Understanding women's experiences with FWA is the first step toward improving the women's quality of life.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of the highly educated and married female Korean employees (HEMFE), work-life balance (WLB), and flexible workplace arrangements (FWA) in the Korean context. The following three questions were examined:

1. What are the experiences of the highly educated and married Korean female employees with work-life balance?
2. What are the experiences of the highly educated and married Korean female employees with flexible workplace arrangements?
3. How do flexible workplace arrangements impact the work-life balances of the highly educated and married Korean female employees?

Theoretical Frameworks

This study focuses on three areas of inquiry—the highly educated and married Korean female employees, flexible workplace arrangements, and work-life balance. Although they are interrelated, each concept is an independent construct and calls for different theories. Therefore, the theoretical frameworks that guided the design of this study were drawn from different areas. They are: Crenshaw's (1989) theory of intersectionality, Clark's (2000) work-family border theory, and Schein's (2004) theory of organizational culture. The three theories were the vital lenses through which to view flexible workplace arrangements and work-life balances for HEMFE in Korea.

Crenshaw's (1989) Intersectionality

An individual with a variety of identities is more likely to encounter different experiences due to his or her multiple statuses (Crenshaw, 1989). Similarly, the term of the

highly educated and married Korean female employee implies that she has multiple identities shaped by gender, education level, marital status, and work status. Connecting the individual's context to work-life balance, underlying the issue of work-life balance, there exists an assumption that compared to their male counterparts, women would likely assume more roles assigned to them by traditional society. This partially explains why work-life balance is often considered a gender issue (Chandra, 2012).

In order to address women's multiple social and cultural responsibilities in general, I used the feminist sociological theory of intersectionality as a critical lens. Proposed by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989), this theory posits that the intersection of multiple identities marginalizes individuals and situates the individuals in more vulnerable positions (Symington, 2004). Similarly, HEMFEs are mainly labeled as employee, wife, mother, and daughter-in-law in the overlapping identities. In the Korean society, particularly, women's marital status gives them more multiple roles and responsibilities compared to men and even single women. Furthermore, the intersectionality theory highlights the individual's diverse experiences in different contexts, not focusing on the homogeneity of one's situations (Nash, 2008). In this sense, the theory of intersectionality was very useful to understand HEMFEs' complicated identities and experiences in the Korean context from a critical perspective.

Clark's (2000) Work-Family Border Theory

The issues of work-life balance have often been addressed in some leading theories, including human ecology theory and the role stress theory. While human ecology theory emphasizes a systematic approach to the study of families, the role stress theory focuses on the negative side of the work-family interaction (Duncan & Pettigrew, 2012; Rantanen, Kinnunen, Mauno, & Tillemann, 2011). However, these theories have limitations in that they

just highlight one aspect of work-family or the relationships between families and the economic environment. In order to complement the existing limitations, Clark (2000) suggested a new perspective on work-family balance, the work-family border theory.

Clark's central point is that "individuals manage and negotiate their work and family spheres and the borders between them in order to attain balance." (Clark, 2000, p. 750). In this theory, *work* and *family* are located in distinctive domains or spheres because each has different rules, thought patterns and behavior, and different ends and means. Despite the differences, *work* and *family* affect each other; and people try to manage to integrate their two different areas to some degree. By doing so, people become "*daily border-crossers*" coming and going between the domains. Compared to the existing work-life balance theories, this theory explains why work and family conflict occurs and suggests prescriptive ways to facilitate work-family balance. In this respect, this theory was utilized as a leading theory of WLB for this study, contributing to interpreting the complex interaction between work and life for HEMFEs in Korea.

Schein's (2004) Organizational Culture Theory

One of my research interests in this study is to explore how the highly educated and married Korean female employees feel and experience a new organizational practice, FWA. The process in which a new practice is incorporated into an organization is usually involved with organizational culture (Burke, 2011). As culture is a set of basic assumptions to determine how the individual behaves in the organization (Burke, 2011), in order to understand the process of accepting FWA in Korean organizations, the nature of an organization's culture should be identified. In this sense, Edgar Schein's (2004) theory of organizational culture was employed as a guiding framework in the study.

In understanding organizational culture, Schein (2004) presented three levels—its artifacts, its espoused beliefs and values, and its basic underlying assumptions. First, artifacts are referred to as the surface observations in the organization such as the visible manifestations (e.g. technology, products, language, etc.). Second, espoused beliefs and values are the certain things about “the shared social experience of a group” (Schein, 2004, p. 29). This happens in the process of solving a problem and dealing with a major issue between leaders and followers by interacting and communicating with each other. Last, basic underlying assumptions are below the conscious, overt level of artifacts and what people espouse. Through the theory, Schein addressed how difficult it is to change the organizational culture because the last level, the basic underlying assumptions, is hard to know.

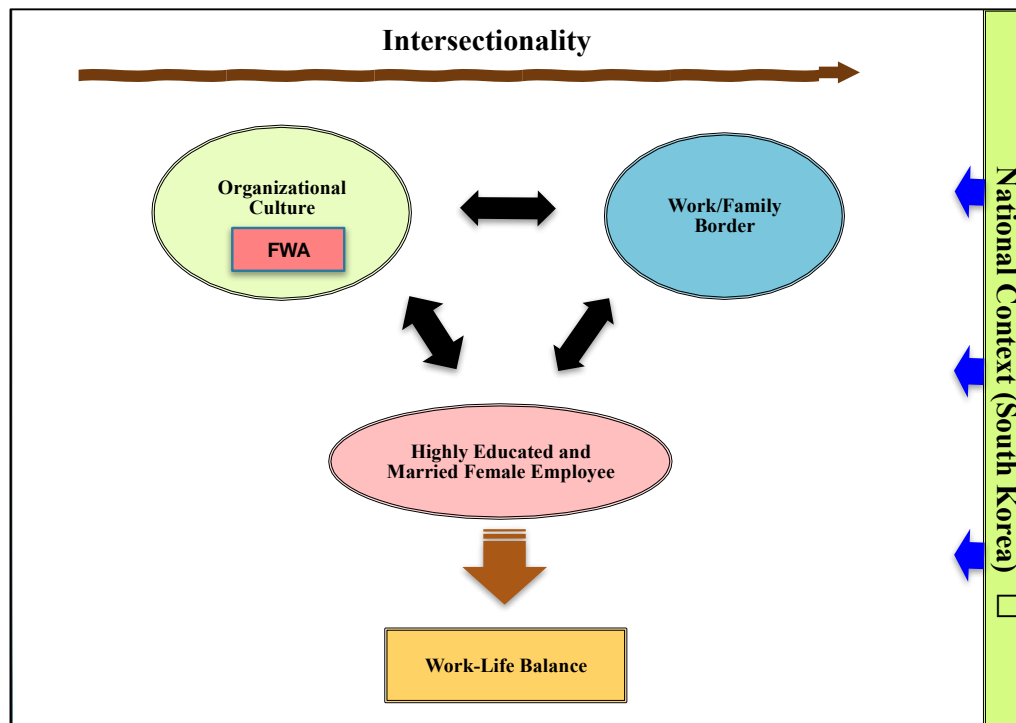


Figure 1. Guiding Framework

Nevertheless, Schein (2004) also offered some useful tips on the successful change of organizational culture, including managing expected anxieties and assessing the possibility for new learning regarding organizational change. Thus, the theory of organizational culture, including the nature of organizational culture and the ways to make a successful change in organizational culture, was very meaningful in understanding the process of accepting a new organizational culture, FWA, into the real workplace for HEMFEs. Figure 1 presents the guiding framework with the integrated theories for my study.

Methodology

Methodology is the activities including the strategies, plans, processes about research design, which affects the use of particular methods by offering a theoretical perspective (Crotty, 1998). Generally, there are two research approaches: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative research aims to identify the cause of the phenomenon and predict a similar phenomenon in the future. Thus, questions beginning with *how often or how much* with the use of statistical numbers and surveys are driven in the quantitative inquiry. In contrast, the interest of qualitative research is to understand how the individuals interpret the phenomenon and make their own meaning based on their experiences, feelings, or emotions (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). That is, the core concept of qualitative research is *the individual's subjectivity*, which is formed by the interaction with others and community.

In this study, I adopted a qualitative design. My choice was strongly influenced by my philosophical paradigm (i.e., preferred ways of understanding reality, establishing knowledge, and getting information about the worlds; Merriam, 2009; Tracy, 2013). Generally, there are four philosophical assumptions according to the purpose of, types of research, and the views of reality: positivist/post-positivist, interpretive, critical, and

postmodern/post-structural (Merriam, 2009). The philosophical assumption underpinning this study is interpretivism (also called social constructivism). In this perspective, there exist multiple realities and interpretations about a phenomenon. Additionally, it is proposed that the individuals give meanings to their experiences, based on their interaction with the surroundings (Merriam, 2009).

The reason that I took an interpretive-based qualitative methodology is because the primary purpose of this study was to understand HEMFES' experiences across two domains-- workplace and home, with FWA and WLB. By taking a qualitative approach, I was able to understand the participants' perspectives and interpretations about the phenomenon (Tracy, 2013). Specifically, I used phenomenology as a leading methodology. The main interest of phenomenology is one's *lived experience* itself rather than making a category about the participants' experiences (Merriam, 2009). Phenomenology is best suited for the purpose of this study focusing on the women's experiences themselves regarding FWA and WLB.

To address research questions, I employed a variety of qualitative methods for sampling, data collection, data analysis, and data representation. Specifically, for sampling, I used a combination of criterion, snowball, and maximum variation methods. For data collection, I utilized interviews and observations as the primary means. For data analysis, I followed Creswell's (2007) six steps for phenomenological study. Finally, to ensure the trustworthiness of a finding, I used multiple techniques such as triangulation, member checks, reflexivity, and audit trail. The methodological issues were discussed in depth in Chapter III.

Significance of the Study

This study has several significances to HRD. First, although work-life balance is

perceived as an essential area of consideration in contemporary organizations and society, this topic has not been actively dealt with in HRD studies (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007). Regarding the little attention to WLB issues in HRD, Grzywacz & Carlson (2007) pointed out that HRD professionals should play a critical role in creating strategies that help employees achieve work-life balance, which consequently contributes to reaching organizational goals. In line with this role of HRD professionals, this study is vigorously involved with boosting female married employees' work-life balance for the mutual benefit of several parties, the individuals, organizations, and nation. Findings from this study will expand the WLB literature base in HRD.

Second, in Korea, although FWA is anticipated as a viable practice for career women to reduce career interruptions and maintain their work-life balance, limited research efforts have been made to understand this practice. Additionally, the existing studies on this topic have mainly been conducted from Western perspectives (Deery, 2008; Kossek & Ozeki, 1999; Moen, Kelly & Hill, 2011), as a result, we know little about how FWA is perceived and practiced in the non-Western context (Chandra, 2012). In discussing the issues of FWA and WBL, culture would be a crucial factor because it often affects the individual's behaviors and emotions (Burke, 2011), thereby influencing employees' career experiences, views of work-balance issues, and the implementation of FWA. Therefore, the cultural context (e.g. organizational culture, family tradition, etc.) is an important consideration when studying FWA and WLB. Given the paucity of literatures about FWA issues in eastern countries, including South Korea, this study is meaningful in that it extends our current knowledge beyond the Western cultural context.

Third, according to McLean & McLean (2001), HRD is “any process or activity that, either initially or over the long term, has the potential to develop adults’ work-based knowledge, expertise, productivity, and satisfaction, whether for personal or group/team gain, or for the benefit of an organizational community, nation, or ultimately, the whole of humanity” (p. 322). They demonstrate the underpinning of humanistic values by emphasizing the quality of human’s lives. Similarly, Guichard (2003) specified HRD’s role as helping individuals create their own humanity by instilling a universal human quality beyond race, ethnicity, and generation, pursuing one’s humanity in their ways. This study is aligned with the perspectives of McLean & McLean (2001), and Guichard (2003). Although my primary focus is the highly educated and married female employees’ career lives in Korea, it ultimately pursues the ways to improve the quality of life for women in general.

Lastly, from a critical perspective, this study is concerned about the voices of one marginalized group (HEMFEs) regarding gender and marital status. It challenges the oppressive social and cultural structures, and brings the injustice of gender inequality in the Korean society to the forefront. By doing so, this study contributes to promoting meaningful changes for the better lives of individuals, organizations, and communities that directly benefit married female employees in dominant power and social structure. This will be one of the important HRD professionals’ roles as well as a strong value of HRD (Bierema, 2002).

Boundary of the Study

This study has some boundaries. First, this study was studied in the context of South Korea. Although WLB is a prevailing issue in many countries, the national context affects the issues of WLB. As mentioned earlier, South Korea has different social and cultural contexts than other countries. By delimiting the boundary of South Korea, this study

highlighted the unique conditions of South Korea related to the HEMFEs. Second, this study focused exclusively on women's experiences with FWA regarding their WLB. As women with multiple roles between the two domains of work and home, their efforts to balance work and life through FWA were one of the main interests in this study. Last, the target related to WLB was delimited to married career women with higher education. Although work-life balance would be applicable to all employees, traditionally, this issue has been framed as "the problem of *maternal* employment" (Moen, 2011, p. 82). My views about WLB were also influenced by the traditional aspect in that it focuses on married women's WLB.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of five chapters. Chapter I provides an overview of the study, including the background, the problems, research purpose and questions, and the theoretical framework, the brief introduction of methodology and methods, significance, and the boundary of the study. Chapter II discusses literatures about WLB and FWA, Korean female employees, and Korean organizational culture. Chapter III introduces the methodology and methods used in the study as well as the researcher's positionality. Chapter IV reports the findings of the study. Lastly, Chapter V provides discussion about the findings, implications for further research and practice, and conclusions.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter Two discusses literature related to the highly educated and married female employees in Korea. Specifically, this chapter consists of four sections. The first section presents an overview of married women's career development, the context of married female Korean employees and the current organizational culture in Korea. The second section provides an overview of the concept of work-life balance and the cultural perspective of work-life balance. The third section reviews flexible workplace arrangements in general, including definition, types, needs from different stakeholders (nation, employer, and employee), and the challenges facing FWAs from different perspectives (nation, employer, and employee) in Korea. The last section describes the three theoretical frameworks guiding this study: Crenshaw's internationality, Clark's work/family border theory, and Schein's organizational culture theory.

Married Women's Career Life in South Korea

An individual's career life, including career path, career development, career identity, and work ethic, is strongly influenced by sociopolitical, cultural, contextual, and personal factors (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2009). Thus, to understand one's career life, we must first understand these contexts in which the individual has lived. Likewise, to understand a Korean married woman's career life, it is necessary to first examine the situations of the career women and the social and organizational culture in South Korea. This section describes the characteristics of married women's career development and the condition of married female Korean employees. It then moves to a discussion about the major

characteristics of the current Korean social and organizational culture, including long working hours, hierarchical culture and collectivism, and patriarchal culture and gender inequality.

Married Women's Career Development

Women's career development is often recognized as more complex than men's because of multiple barriers embedded in social, cultural, and political structures. The difficulties women have generally undergone in their career paths include traditional gender-role orientation, inequities of employment, and work and family conflicts (Coogan & Chen, 2007). Particularly, Betz (1994) highlighted that women's first and foremost obstacle in their career life is gendered stereotypes concerning both work and family roles. Women's traditional gender roles are often internalized through socialization from early childhood with an emphasis on responsibility for childbearing and childrearing (Betz, 1994). As a result, while males are strongly encouraged to pursue their career as a breadwinner, females are regarded as a secondary wage earner, facing both internal and external barriers in pursuit of their career accomplishment (Coogan & Chen, 2007).

For married career women, when work and life roles conflict with each other, their career continuations are more easily threaten. In reality, women's careers are often cut off or delayed temporarily or permanently compared to men's due to marriage, childbirth, childcare, and senior care. For this reason, the pressure of family responsibilities is projected as the most demanding factor in interrupting women's careers (Kang, 2005). Consequently, married female employees tend to juggle their roles in work and home domains. However, if an individual, in this case, a female married employee with higher career aspirations and a talented ability, is forced to abandon her career because of social and cultural constraints, it

will be a tragedy for the individual and furthermore, a big loss of the organization and the nation in the long term.

Married Women's Career Lives in South Korea

As briefly mentioned in Chapter One, South Korea has a number of highly educated women. The percentage of Korean women who have obtained higher education (35%) is comparable with that in any OECD countries (the average 32%, OECD, 2012). However, according to the report of OECD Employment Outlook, the employment rate in Korea was 64.2% in 2013, lower than the 65% OECD average. One of the main causes of the below average employment rate was the low employment of women. Korean women's employment rate was reported to be 53.5% in 2012, which is 3.5% below the OECD average. Regarding this phenomenon, this report directly announced that this is "an indication that the potential labor force is not being fully utilized" (OECD, 2013, p. 1). The ineffective utilization of potential women forces is closely associated with the number of career-interrupted women in Korea (Ministry of Gender Equality & Family, 2014). Regardless of women's higher education background, social and cultural customs and prejudices--a patriarchal practice prevailing in many Korean organizations have forced women to leave their workplace as a result of marriage, and family members' (particularly, parents-in-laws') opposition to women's continuing with their careers after marriage or childbirth. In addition, the male-centered working environment often leads to women's involuntary career interruption (Oh, Kim, & Uhm, 2012).

According to a survey of the conditions of career-interrupted Korean women conducted by the South Korean Ministry of Gender Equality & Family in 2013, more than half (58%) of the respondents (5,854 married women aged 25-59) have experienced a career

interruption. The survey also revealed that the biggest reason for the women's quitting jobs was marriage (63.4%), followed by childbirth (24.7%), childrearing (5.9%), and caring for family (4.9%). Also, more than 40% of the women who attributed childbirth and childrearing to their career interruption were in their twenties and thirties. Specifically, the rate was the highest (48.9%) for women aged 30-34 (Ministry of Gender Equality & Family, 2014).

Connecting the survey results with the current demographic characteristics of Korean women in their thirties, the finding is especially noticeable. According to the statistics from the government of the city of Seoul in Korea, in the year 2014, the average age of the first marriage for women in Seoul was 30.4 years old and the average age of the mothers giving birth was 32.5 years old (74.2% women who gave birth that year were in their thirties, Kim, 2014). This means that most of Korean women's marriage, childbirth, and childrearing take place in their early thirties. This reality also implies that women in their early thirties are more likely to experience a career break because of the above mentioned reasons. In fact, this period is considered as the most vulnerable period of the married female employees' career continuation. Corresponding with this interpretation, in a survey by the Ministry of Gender Equality & Family (2014), among the married female employees (3,268), 11.8% of them responded that they might leave their workplace within a year; particularly, regarding this survey question, the percentage of women in their twenties and thirties was higher than those in their forties and fifties, 16.4% and 10.3%, respectively. The main reasons were low income (28.5%), childbirth, childrearing, and the education of their children (16.3%), and difficulty with work-life balance due to long working time (6.9%). Notably, those who may quit their jobs because of childbirth, childrearing, the education of their children were more

salient in their twenties and thirties, accounting for 45.7%, which is 25 times higher than those in their forties and fifties (1.8%).

As identified in the survey, many Korean women tend to quit their jobs in the early years of marriage or childrearing when they are in their late twenties and early thirties. Then, they usually reenter the labor market several years later in their mid-forties when their children go to elementary school (Brinton, 2001a). As a result, while many developed countries have a reverse U type (a gradual slope of female labor force from their twenties to fifties) of women's economic participation with age, Korean women's economic participant shows an M-curve. The M-curve describes the phenomenon that women's economic participation peaks in their late twenties to early thirties, then the slope turns downwards due to housekeeping, the burden of childrearing and the poor working environment for women, and increases in their mid-forties again, thereby creating the first and the second of the two crowns in the letter M. The M curve type is known to only occur in South Korea and Japan (Han, 2012). Similarly, for highly educated Korean women, they also abandoned their jobs for the same reasons. However, they show a different shape, L rather than M, by no longer seeking jobs after career interruption in their thirties (Ministry of Gender Equality & Family, 2014). As they realize the reality that they cannot have the same or equivalent jobs as before, they likely give up having any jobs. Hence, an M-curve and L-type are the most distinctive features of the female labor force in South Korea.

Additionally, another survey for career-interrupted women demonstrated that in the process of reentry into the workplace, many career-interrupted women value flexible time as the most important and preferred factor in their job decision. This is especially the case with the married women aged 30-34 (41.6% of the population chose FWAs as the most critical

determining factor). This is mainly because they still have the desire to attend to their children while engaging in work (Ministry of Gender Equality & Family, 2013). Thus, considering the married female Korean employees' life cycle and the social and cultural structure of the labor market, there is a clear need for workplace flexibility in the Korean society. That is, Korean professional women desire to have a family-friendly program which would help them reduce family-work conflicts, thereby contributing to improving Korean women's economic participation as well as maintaining their careers (Hong, Lee, & Kim, 2011). Consistent with the critical needs for FWA among married Korean female employees, Liechty & Anderson (2007) stated that most female employees wanted to have FWA so that they could focus on family responsibilities and work-life balance. Lyness, Gornick, Stone, and Grotto (2012) also stressed the need for workplace flexibility because it is connected to the expansion of women's paid employment.

Organizational Culture in Korea

This section deals with the main characteristics of the current organizational culture in South Korea that influence married female employees. Specifically I discuss four aspects of the organizational culture: long working hours, hierarchical culture and collectivism, and patriarchal culture, and gender inequality.

Long working hours. According to the OECD better life index (2013), which is an indicator comparing well-being across OECD nations based on eleven critical topics in the areas of material living conditions and quality of life, Korea ranked 33rd out of 36 countries regarding individual work-life balance. The most important criterion in evaluating this issue was how much time an employee spent at work. This is because while working time is considered as one of the important aspects of work-life balance, long work hours may have

negative influences on personal health, safety, and stress (OECD, 2013). Statistically, employees in Korea work 2090 hours a year, which is the fourth highest among the OECD countries and is 420 hours more than the OECD average of 1776 hours. Korean employees' working hours are 44.6 hours per week while the OECD average is 32.8 hours (CNN, 2013). However, compared to the very long working hours, the labor productivity in Korea is very low (\$29.75 per working hour), ranked the 4th from the bottom, compared to the OECD average of \$44.56 (Business Korea, 2014).

One of the interesting reasons why Koreans have long working hours was attributed to an organizational culture known as *walking on eggshells around their bosses or supervisors* (Joo, 2008). Most employees in Korea feel a strong pressure to not leave their offices on time or before their supervisors leave. Even though they have completed their assigned work, as long as their supervisors do not leave the office, they cannot help but stay and waste time until their boss leaves. If they leave work without a good reason, they would be treated as rude or a social misfit. Results from a survey conducted in Korea showed that Korean employees wasted almost 50-60% of their daily working time by checking emails and social networks such as Facebook, or chatting online because they already knew that they would stay longer in the office after closing time (Joo, 2008). The culture of trying to read the master's mind, which is influenced by the Confucian value of the elders first, has been embedded in the Korean society as a long-standing tacit organizational practice (Joo, 2008).

Another reason for the long working hours in Korea could be the prevalence of *night overtime*. According to a 2014 survey conducted by the Korean Ministry of Employment and Labor, 43.65 percent of employees in Korea worked overtime each day for at least one hour.

Regarding the reasons, 25.8 percent of employees responded that their overtime was taken for granted, while 20.9 percent of them mentioned low work efficiency during working hours, and 9.4 percent noted the pressure from their senior workers. In addition, about 70 percent of the employees experienced burn-out, resulting in working inefficiency and a lack of concentration caused by little rest and self-development. Despite the unfair treatment received, these employees did not have any specific countermeasures against it (Business Korea, 2014). Consequently, to understand the concept of employees' working hours in Korea, it should be noted that the quantity of working hours, including physical presence in their office, is rated higher than the quality of work produced, and this practice is strongly influenced by seniors' working styles and their treatment of their subordinates.

In sum, long working time is directly associated with stress in balancing work and family roles because an employee's time spent at work often comes at the expense of family time (Hosteler, Desrochers, Kopko, & Moen, 2012). Regarding long working hours in Korea, Cheon (2010) pointed out that it has dual meanings: the purpose of reduction in labor costs as well as the 24/7 system that employees are always prepared for in case of emergency. He also stated that it means that the management system in Korea is still less advanced and sophisticated (Cheon, 2010). Hong (2010) also criticized the practice of long working time saying it is one of the important roadblocks that hinder women's economic participation in Korea because this practice requires male or non-married laborers who are relatively free from family responsibilities.

Hierarchical culture and collectivism. Hofstede's original study examined national cultures within the same multinational organization (IBM) across 53 countries (Hofstede, 1980). Based on his findings, Hofstede identified four cultural dimensions: individualism vs.

collectivism; power distance; masculinity vs. femininity, and uncertainty avoidance. These four dimensions were subsequently expanded to six a few years later, including long-term orientation vs. short-term normative, and indulgence vs. restraint. According to Hofstede's original findings (Hofstede Centre, 2014), connecting with distinctive Korean organizational culture, South Korea scored high on power distance (60), collectivism (82), and uncertainty avoidance (85) out of 100.

First, the dimension of power distance deals with the fact that all individuals in societies are not equal. Representing the attitude of the culture toward these inequalities among people, power is distributed unequally. The score of 60 out of 100 reflects that South Korea is a hierarchical society. This means that people accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place and which needs no further justification. Hierarchy in an organization is seen as reflecting inherent inequalities, centralization is popular, subordinates expect to be told what to do, and the ideal boss is a benevolent autocrat (Hofstede Centre, 2014).

Second, the dimension of individualism versus collectivism evaluates the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members. It is related to whether people's self-image is defined as "I" or "We." In individualistic societies people are supposed to look after themselves and their immediate family only. The score of 82 out of 100 indicates that South Korea is a highly collectivistic society. In collectivist societies people belong to *in groups* that take care of them in exchange for loyalty, thereby creating strong commitments and relationships to the groups or organizations rather than any societal rules and regulations. In addition, the relationships between the employer and employee are perceived in ethical terms (like a family link), and hiring and promotion decisions consider the employee's in-group. Similarly, management is the management of groups (Hofstede Centre, 2014).

In terms of the two cultural dimensions, power distance and collectivism, Lee (1998) pointed out that Korean culture and management practices should be understood in the Confucian tradition (introduced in more depth in the following subsection) which stresses the nature of human relationships and an inherent inequity between parties with a focus on harmonious family-like relationships. Lee's findings are congruent with Hofstede's that Korea has a strong power distance and a collectivistic orientation. Because of the hierarchical culture of many organizations in Korea, it is often difficult for individuals on a team to suggest views that are different from their seniors. This often results in a "groupthink" environment that offers the safe perception of consensus, and the exchange of opinions and ideas between seniors and juniors is less likely to take place. There are fewer criticisms from junior employees toward their superiors because the juniors do not want to make their boss lose face. Thus, most employees in Korea simply follow their seniors with less questioning and adjust their behavior to accommodate their superiors' (Kee, 2008).

Last, uncertainty avoidance is about how much the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations, and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid these. The score of 85 out of 100 indicates that South Korea is one of the most uncertainty avoiding countries. Countries in the category tend to uphold their rigid social norms, beliefs, and behaviors, and are less likely to be tolerant of unorthodox behaviors and ideas. In these cultures, time is considered money and people have an inner urge to be busy and work hard. Also, while precision and punctuality are the norm, innovation is avoided and security consists of an important component in individual motivation (Hofstede Centre, 2014). In other words, this result implies the difficulty in creating a new culture in an organization in the unsecured condition. Consistent with Lewin's (1958) change theory,

without a strong driving force to change some existing conditions and any institutions or beliefs to foster the new culture (i.e. flexible workplace arrangement in this study), people's anxiety toward the new culture would increase and sustaining this new culture within an organization is hardly to be expected.

Confucianism, patriarchal culture and gender inequality. According to the Gender Gap Index (2013), which is an index to assess and compare global gender inequality through four critical areas, economic participation, educational attainment, political empowerment and health, the overall rank of gender inequality in South Korea is 111 out of 136 countries. Specifically, South Korea ranked 120th in terms of wage inequality for similar work, 118th for women's economic participation and opportunity, and 105th for the ratio of male to female legislators, senior officials and managers. There is little gender difference in terms of educational attainment, and Korea is one of the countries with a good number of highly educated women (a total of 35% of women in Korea have received higher education, compared to 32%, the average of OECD nations). Nevertheless, the utilization of Korean women in the labor force is very low, especially for married women (OECD, 2012).

A gender inequality in Korea, especially in the economic area can be traced back to the influence of Confucianism. Confucianism has been one of the major building blocks of Koreans' value systems and social structures for a thousand years. It is considered a life philosophy or ethnical values that guide Koreans' daily lives and shape the political system (Kee, 2008). Women's traditional roles and characteristics as defined in Confucianism are submissiveness toward men (their fathers and husbands) and performance of multiple roles in the family such as a mother, a wife, and a daughter-in-law. In Confucian teaching, "happy families are the foundation for a harmonious society and filial piety is regarded as the prior

criteria for creating happy families” (Kee, 2008, p. 4). Underlying the problem of the Confucian teaching is that the main person who should fulfill several duties to make a happy family and serve with filial piety, especially for her husbands’ parents, is the woman. Because of the long-standing prejudice and practice deeply embedded in Confucianism, favoritism of men is still a distinctive feature in today’s Korean society, both at work and at home (Kee, 2008).

In the interplay among complicated social, cultural, political, and personal contexts, women are more likely to have difficulties from the phase of recruitment to maintaining their career even after entering the labor market (Coogan & Chen, 2007). Specifically, in male-centered practices in organizations, women are likely exposed to a glass ceiling or a glass wall which prevents their promotion to higher positions; therefore, they often find it difficult to advance in their career. Although the glass ceiling and the glass wall have diminished under the Korean government’s implementation of an affirmative action that aims to increase the number of managerial women in workplaces (Lee, 2006), many Korean women still feel a sense of frustration in their career development in the complex social and cultural norms.

Additionally, one of the difficulties that Korean female employees have undergone in their workplace is frequent get-togethers after work and a heavy drinking culture, which are manifestation of the highly collectivistic and a male-centered culture. In the Korean workplace, company dinners and drinking after work are regarded as important means to form strong camaraderie and to become part of an informal network. In the organizational culture of heavy drinking, women are usually forced to drink like men. Those who opt out are considered “rude or hopelessly boring” (CNN, 2013) particularly, when they refuse the alcohol offered by their boss. In fact, *business boozing* was chosen as one of “the ten things

South Korea does better than anywhere else” by CNN in 2013. CNN even introduced a business traveler’s guide to surviving a Korean drinking session (CNN, 2013). Thus, not to be alienated from important organizational networks which influence their career advancement, employees have few options but to attend their company dinners and adopt the drinking culture.

Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance is an important issue for employees regardless of their education level, gender, occupation, race, age, and job status because it is related to a major stressor for employees, juggling work and personal life (McMillan, Morris, & Atchley, 2011). Work-life conflict triggers poor work performance, and forces employees to find another job to balance work and life (Lee, Lee, & Han, 2008). Although work is considered to be one of the central means to a better life and to the well-being of the family (Chandra, 2012), without the balance between work and life, people can hardly improve the quality of their lives. With this in mind, I discuss, in the following subsections, the concepts of WLB, and WLB and culture.

Definition of Work-Life Balance

With regard to the definition of work-life balance, little agreement has been revealed. McMillan, Morris, & Atchley (2011) attributed such lack of consensus to the nature of WLB. That is, while WLB has received a great deal of attention by people it is so “frequently referenced in our everyday language by a wide variety of audiences” (p. 9), it has become an “almost taken for granted metaphor” (Pitt-Catsoupes, Kossek, & Sweet, 2006, p. 9). Scholars have given a plethora of meanings to WBL. For example, Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw (2003) define WLB as “equal time, equal psychological involvement, and equal satisfaction with one’s family and work roles” or simply the absence of work-family conflict

(Duncan & Pettigrew, 2012, p. 404). The meaning of balance here refers to the individual's equal engagement in his or her work and family role, psychologically and physically. In Voydanoff's (2005) definition, WLB is referred to as "a global assessment that work and family resources are sufficient to meet work and family demands such that participation is effective in both domains" (p. 825). This definition emphasizes balance with a comprehensive assessment that satisfies both work and home. Chang, McDonald, and Burton (2010) described WLB as "harmony or equilibrium between work and family domains" (p. 2382). Clark (2000) defined it as "satisfaction and good functioning at work and home, with a minimum of role conflict" (p. 751), or "equilibrium or maintaining overall sense of harmony in life" (Clarke, Koch, & Hill, 2004, p. 121). These scholars all associate WLB with increased satisfaction and reduced work-family conflict at the same time. Despite the variations in the WLB definitions, a commonality exist in that WLB is involved with improving the quality of the individual's life in the interactions with the two domains of work and home.

Furthermore, there are some key terms related to the concept of WLB such as work-life conflict (WLC) and work-life enrichment (WLE). According to McMillan, Morris, & Atchley (2011), these three concepts (conflict, enrichment and balance) have *cross-domain effects*, that is, "those experiences and decisions that occur in one domain and are capable of influencing outcomes in the other domain" (p. 8). These three concepts are closely related to one another and affect bidirectionally work and life spheres. The outcomes of the influence can be negative or positive. Consequently, the interface interplaying the three concepts demonstrates that two domains, work and life, are very dynamic and complicated (McMillan et al., 2011). Thus, in order to advance the conceptualization of the work and life interface,

McMillan et al. (2011) introduce the new concept of work-life harmony to replace WLB. In their definition, work-life harmony is referred to as “an individually pleasing, congruent arrangement of work and life roles that is interwoven into a single narrative of life” (McMillan et al., 2011, p. 15). According to them, when the resources acquired through work-life enrichment (such as development, capital gains, and efficiency) are successfully aligned, and eased the stressors caused by work-life conflict, harmony can occur (McMillan et al., 2011).

However, Fleetwood (2007) reminded us:

It is unclear whether WLB refers to: an objective state of affairs, a subjective experience, perception or feeling; an actuality or an aspiration; a discourse or a practice; a metaphor for flexible working; a metaphor for the gendered division of labor; or a metaphor for some other political agenda. (p. 352)

Fleetwood’s statement clearly indicates that WLB connotes various meanings to different people (McMillan, Morris, & Atchley, 2011). Therefore, it would be more important to understand the individual’s context in defining WLB.

Cultural Impact on Work-Life Balance

Recently, WLB has received considerable attention in South Korea since the Korean government expressed an interest in WLB a few years ago (Jeong, 2010). The Korean government was particularly interested in the positive findings revealed by the empirical studies on work and family issues and plans to conceive some WLB policies, including FWAs. However, most of the findings from these studies were generated in the Western context which presents strikingly different characteristics of family, industrial structure, and individualism (Chandra, 2012; Lee, Chang, & Kim, 2011). Thus, it remains unclear how

cultural differences between western and non-western countries affect WLB (Chandra, 2012).

Yet, clearly, culture is a very important element that affects the nature of work-family balance and conflict. As people usually acquire culture through the socialization process, including family, school, workplace, and other institutions, culture strongly influences the formation of one's perceptions, feelings, and behaviors (Joplin, Shaffer, Francesco, & Lau, 2003). Similarly, historical, political, economic, social and cultural differences between countries create different assumptions on divisions of labor and gender role expectations at work and within the family (Komarraju, 2006). Therefore, cultural factors are likely to have a noticeable impact on employees' career experiences, views of work-balance issues, and flexible workplace practices.

Generally, in non-western countries, including South Korea, collectivism is valued and equal partnership between men and women is less likely to be expected. As a result of lack of recognition of gender equality, governmental and organizational supports for work-family balance would also be limited (Hill et al., 2004). In line with this perspective, the current organizational culture in Korea as described above (e.g., long working hours, hierarchical culture and collectivism, and patriarchal culture) would affect the findings related to WLB studies. Hence, without the understanding of the different cultural elements and their effect on WLB in different cultural contexts, it would be difficult to design and implement an appropriate WLB policy or program, including FWA. That is, in order to bring out a positive outcome of the WLB policy, a solid understanding of organizational culture and a specific country setting is crucial.

Flexible Workplace Arrangement

This section discusses the concepts of FWAs, types, and the needs of FWAs from different stakeholders (employee, employer, and nation). It also identifies the challenges in implementing FWA in Korea from each stakeholder's perspectives in Korea.

Concepts of a Flexible Workplace Arrangement

There is little consensus on a standard definition of a flexible workplace (Glass & Finely, 2002; Kelly & Moen, 2007; Lyness, Gornick, Stone, & Grotto, 2012). Rather, the notion of a flexible workplace has been defined by many scholars from multiple perspectives. Glass and Finely (2002) defined FWA as the practice of “conflating a variety of different schedule arrangements such as flex time, part-time, and job-sharing under the general heading of flexible or alternative work arrangements” (p. 325). This definition emphasizes the importance of having different forms of workplace arrangements depending on an employee's needs. Rau (2003) described FWA as “an alternative work option that allows work to be accomplished outside of the traditional temporal and/ or spatial boundaries of a standard workday” (p. 1). Rau's conceptualization embraces a general perspective on FWA as an alternative work style. Karasek and Theorell (1990) considered FWA in relation to job control, which is one of the keys to FWA. Based on their definition, FWA is an employee's potential control over his/her tasks and his/her conduct during the working day. Berg et al. (2004) argued that an FWA is “employee control over working time, as the ability of individual workers to increase or decrease their working hours and to alter their work schedule” (pp. 331-332). In their study, two different aspects of control were identified: the timing of work and the duration of work hours or days.

Despite different extents and foci as manifested in varied definitions of FWA, it is generally agreed that the core concept of an FWA is controlling one's schedule (Duncan &

Pettigrew, 2012; Hill, Yang, Hawkins & Ferris, 2008). Duncan and Pettigrew (2012) argued that flextime allows employees to choose the beginning and ending time of their working days within organizational parameters. Here, an employer's perspective of the means of human management for employees is also added to the operation of the FWA as an important variable. Additionally, Hill et al. (2008) referred to FWA as "the ability of workers to make choices influencing when, where, and for how long they engage in work-related tasks" (p. 152). While they pointed out the management of workers, time, places, and hours in the FWA, individual choices or preferences are the main consideration.

Based on the various definitions presented above, the key factors identified in defining an FWA are as follows: an alternative work arrangement, control over time and spaces, individual choices or preferences, autonomy, and organizational environments. Based on them, I propose a working definition to guide this study.

A flexible workplace arrangement is an alternative work arrangement that grants individuals within an organization the autonomy to choose and control their work time and space based on their personal needs and/or preferences.

Types of Flexible Work Arrangements

The flexibility of work arrangements is manifested primarily in two ways—time and place (Schockley & Allen, 2007). Flexible time refers to the extent to which an employee can alter his or her work schedule; and flexible place refers to the extent to which an employee can choose a location to complete his or her assigned work tasks (Shockely & Allen, 2007).

Flexible time can take a variety of forms such as changes in scheduled work hours involving traditional flextime as follows (Casey & Chase, 2004; Schockley & Allen, 2007; Brown, Wong, & McNamara, 2009):

1. Compressed workweeks and arrangements: e.g., 9/80 (a work schedule that squeezes 80 hours' labor time into 9 business days and offers every other Friday off)
2. Changes in starting/quitting times from time to time
3. Choosing a schedule that varies from the typical schedule
4. Adjustment in the number of working hours per week or per year: e.g. summer off or reduced hours during the off-season
5. Allowing employees to have time for special purposes during their career path: e.g. sabbaticals, an extended leave for care-giving, or leave for education or training

Flexible place is associated with the space in which people choose their working location, such as working from home, from satellite sites, or off-site. In addition to the above two types of FWA, Casey and Chase (2004) added one more dimension of flexibility, work processes. This involves redesigning or restructuring work to decrease inefficiencies and eliminate low value work (Brown, Wong, & McNamara, 2009; Pitt-Catsouphes et al., 2007).

Needs for Flexible Workplace Arrangements

In present research literature, the needs for flexible workplace arrangements has been examined mainly from the perspective of three stakeholders. They are the employer, the employee, and the country. In this section, each perspective on FWAs is discussed.

Employers' Perspective. From the employers' perspective, a flexible workplace arrangement is an organizational strategy for human resource management (HRM) in workplace settings. There are a number of factors that prompt organizations to offer FWAs. Brown et al. (2009) identified five of them: (a) to help employees manage work and family life, (b) to improve employee morale, (c) to retain employees (reduce turnover), (d) to respond to employees' needs, and (e) simply to do the right thing. In addition, reducing

absenteeism, decreasing stress and health care costs, boosting productivity, and improving loyalty and commitment are also identified as factors that might have encouraged employers to implement FWA (Casey & Chase, 2004). Driven by the organizational need for unpacking potential benefits of using FWA as a strategy, researchers who studied the employers' perspective tended to look for empirical evidence of the effectiveness of FWA by looking at employees' performances or productivity, commitment, and overall health.

Ample research evidence supports that FWA can lead to positive outcomes. For example, it is found that FWA contributes to enhancing performance within organizations through reduction of work-life conflict (Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Council of Economic Advisors, 2010). Moreover, it is also found that work-time flexibility helps employees' physical and mental health and well-being, including better sleep quality, increased energy, and decreased psychological stress (Moen, Kelly, Tranby, & Huang, 2011). Furthermore, research reveals that the implementation of FWA may also lead to a decrease in absenteeism and a positive change in job attitudes (e.g. more job satisfaction, increased organizational commitment, and improved morale (Council of Economic Advisors, 2010; Deery, 2008). One of the most notable features from the employer's perspective is that many organizations have adopted FWA as a means of talent management to retain highly skilled employees. In this regard, many studies have revealed that work-time control by employees can have a positive influence on retention of good employees and therefore, reducing turnover rates (Deery, 2008; Kossek & Ozeki, 1999; Moen, Kelly & Hill, 2011). To sum up, from an employer's perspective, an FWA is usually adopted for two reasons: (a) to address employees' specific, ongoing needs; and (b) to attract and retain competent employees in the long term.

Employees' Perspective. From the employees' perspective, it is work-life balance that is valued the most. This perspective is associated with employees' needs in pursuit of their new career values (work-life balance), not just following money. Shapiro et al. (2009) pointed out Generation X workers' paradigm shift regarding the value of careers, "unwilling to put in the effort to get to the top" (p. 477), and rather valuing the quality of life. A survey by the Society of Human Resource Management revealed that 48% of HR professionals ranked *flexibility to balance life and work issues* as "very important." In this survey, WLB was projected as one of the leading values in the workplace for employees in addition to compensation, benefits, and job security (McMillan et al., 2011). Such value orientations encourage employers to seek a new management strategy that would reflect the new career value.

The most studied issue about FWA from the employee's perspective is the reduction in work and family conflict or balance of work and family--such as maternity leave, leave for care-giving, compressed time, or changes in starting and quitting schedules for family responsibilities (Chandra, 2012; Duncan & Pettigrew, 2012; Shcokley & Allen, 2007). Yet, as the employees are often subject to the organizational decision in implementing WLB practices, including FWA, it is very important to understand the relationship between the view of employers and that of employees (Fleetwood, 2007b). In this regard, some studies (Allen, 2001; Cook, 2009) revealed that an organization's perception and supervisory support are decisive factors that lead to successful family friendly policies or programs. They also pointed out that based on the roles of family-supportive organization perceptions, FWA can bring positive outcomes to turnover, job satisfaction, and job burnout (Allen, 2001; Cook, 2009). Last, the employee's view on FWA also deals with employees' general leave of

absence and work-time control for education or training for their career development and other individual goals (Brown et al., 2009). This view has been rarely studied. Hence, research on other triggers for implementing FWA is needed.

National Perspective. The last stakeholder is the nation or state. Recently, some developed countries, including South Korea, have proposed workplace flexibility as a way to address issues associated with some emerging trends. For example, several social-cultural demographic changes in the labor force have taken place in recent years, including the increased aging workforce, a low birth rate, dual-income families, working mothers with young children, and women's expanded economic participation (Allen, 2001; Council of Economic Advisors, 2010; Lyness, Gornick, Stone, & Grotto, 2012; Pitt-Catsoupes, Smyer, Matz-Costa & Kane, 2007; Watson & Swanberg, 2011). Such changes warrant the need for national governments to assess and restructure the labor force. Among various initiatives, FWA has been identified as one of the national human resource management (NHRM) and development (NHRD) strategies in some countries such as South Korea. This national perspective of FWA is based on the premise that sufficient national support for women's economic participation would result in positive impacts on the use of national human resources; otherwise, it may exacerbate the low birth rate issue caused by women's reluctance to marry or have children.

With this recognition, in March 2010, the Executive Office of the President's Council of Economic Advisers, a sub-organization of the White House in the United States, published the report, *Work-Life Balance and the Economics of Workplace Flexibility*. In this report, the federal government of the United States not only presents the economic benefits of flexible workplace policies and practices but also calls for many organizations to value flexible

arrangements more than the costs of implementing them (Council of Economic Advisors, 2010). This report is an evidence of the official government endorsement of using workplace flexibility as a cost-effective means to attract and retain employees, as well as to balance work-life for employees, including target groups such as women and the elderly. In South Korea, some studies have been conducted to examine the value of having family-friendly policies in promoting women's economic participation in the society (Hong, 2010; Lee, Lee, & Han, 2008). However, most of the studies tend to be led by public research institutes under the government to plan and carry out family-friendly policies, which are mainly focused on examining the needs of family-friendly policies in Korea or reviewing WLB literature from Western countries. On the other hand, to keep pace with the new trends of contemporary workplaces, the Ministry of Security and Public Administration (2010) in South Korea adopted FWA in trial runs to determine whether it is effective in relieving work-family conflicts. After the use of FWA for two months, it was discovered that regardless of gender, the public officers' job performance was increased and job satisfaction was improved.

The distinctive feature of the national perspective on FWA is that it tends to target specific groups such as women and the elderly for special purposes. From this perspective, FWA play a key role in managing national human resources in a long term as a national strategy. To sum up, each stakeholder appears to have unique goals to achieve through FWA. Nevertheless, all the three perspectives are interwoven and should not be separated when planning and implementing FWA related policies or programs. Furthermore, despite the different purposes, there is a common value, work-life balance, at the intersection of the perspectives of the stakeholders. Figure 2 summarizes the three stakeholders' perspectives presented above.

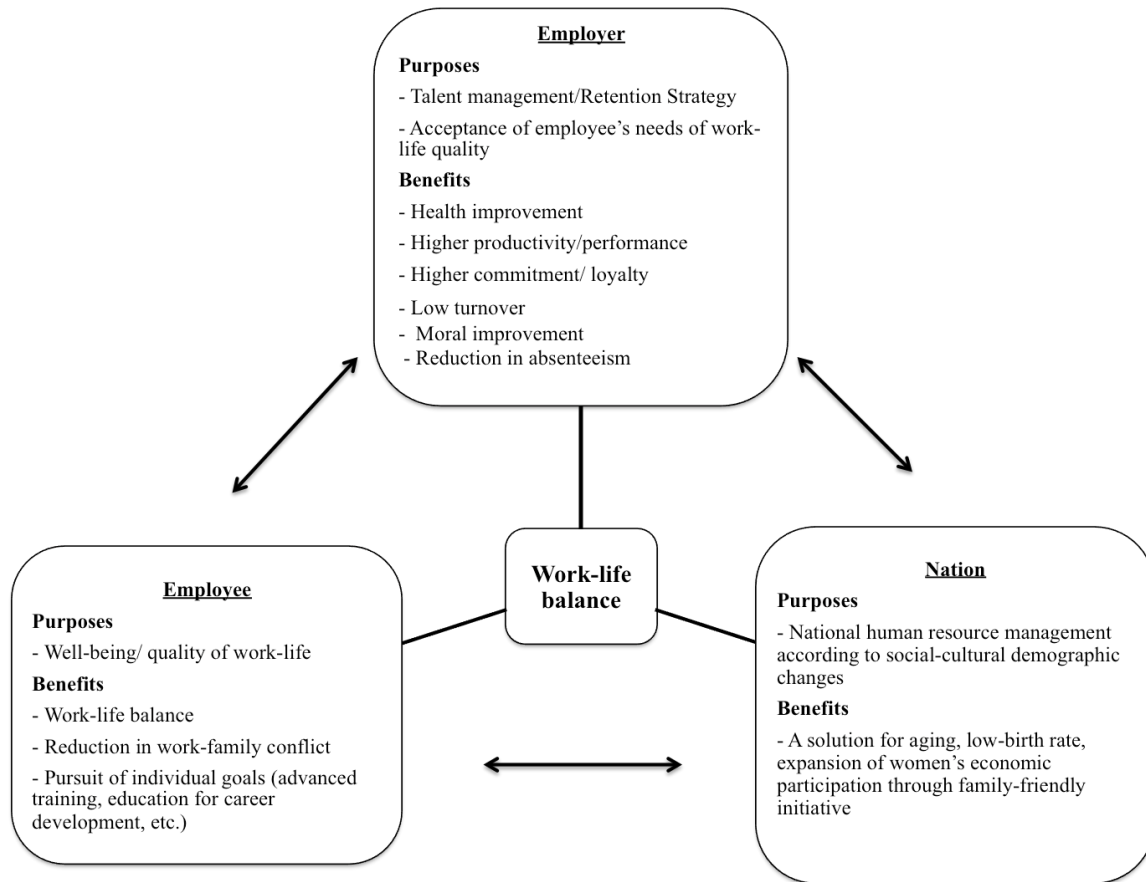


Figure 2. Three Stakeholders' Perspectives on FWA

Challenges of Flexible Workplace Arrangements in South Korea

This section deals with the current and anticipated challenges in the very early stage of adopting FWA in Korea. The challenges are discussed from different stakeholders' perspectives: nation, employer, employee (including labor unions). To help in the understanding the current FWA policy in Korea, the background of its adoption in Korea is also explicated from the national perspective.

National Perspective. The concept of the current FWA was initiated by the current government led by President Geun-hye Park through a national memorandum, *The Roadmap to Achieve 70% Employment Rate*, in June, 2013. President Park has repeatedly emphasized

that jobs are not only the basis of people's lives but also a precondition for happiness, and proclaimed that the top priority of the new government is to achieve an employment rate of 70% (the employment rate has been stuck at 63-64% since 2003). The Korean government has also recognized that one important solution to address the aging workforce and low fertility is to increase the employment rate. With this mind, the government came up with the *Roadmap to Achieve 70% Employment Rate*, which includes innovative plans to create new jobs (including decent part-time jobs), create a culture of work-life balance, and eliminate barriers that prevent women, youths, the middle-aged, and the elderly from entering the labor market (Roadmap to Achieve 70% Employment Rate, 2013).

One of the interesting strategies for WLB and creating decent part-time jobs proposed by the government is to introduce flexible working hours. Here, decent part-time work is defined as *a job which meets voluntary personal needs (study, child care, phased retirement), is free of discrimination, and guarantees basic working conditions (minimum wage, the four basic insurances, etc.; Ministry of Employment and Labor, 2013)*. To realize these plans, in the public sector, the government has had a plan to hire part-time general public officials for the first time in 2014. Also, the government conceived of hiring part-time teachers in elementary and secondary schools while the legal ground for hiring them has been in the pipeline. In the private sector, the government offers companies that create decent part-time jobs temporary partial tax exemptions and social insurance premium subsidies. Employees will be encouraged to use the system of working shorter hours for one year during a child-rearing period in addition to one year of childcare leave. In addition, while a law will be established to protect part-time workers and promote their employment, the number of smart

work centers will be gradually increased to promote flexible work arrangements (Ministry of Employment and Labor, 2013).

Currently, the purposes and plans proposed by the Korean government to accomplish a 70% employment rate through the shift in the existing paradigm for job creation seem to be very ideal if they can succeed. However, because of the inherent constraints in the roadmap itself that aims to give direction to the policy, the Roadmap will be implemented as an annual rolling plan; that is, after considering the results of a yearly comparison of the plan and its outcomes, the government will adjust the plan for the following year and discuss additional tasks. Therefore, in order for it not to be a one-shot and idealistic plan, the Korean government needs to consider many challenges from different stakeholders (e.g. employees, employers, and NGOs, etc.) and establish viable strategies. Particularly, carrying out the Roadmap will involve pain and costs for all tripartite partners (employers, the unions, and the government). Without the cooperation of the tripartite partners, the government will not achieve satisfactory results with their new plans. Therefore, the biggest factor for the government will be to find some common interests, visions, or benefits for the different parties. That is, the primary task of the government should be how to draw tripartite cooperation at this point.

In the long term, the adoption of FWA would also be connected with how to create a successful paradigm shift in terms of the creation of jobs as well as the quality of the workplace out of the existing organizational culture. However, this Roadmap seems to provide idealized visions and plans, including a physical system, but it does not provide specific strategies regarding how to gain buy-in from the different stakeholders. Likewise, there are very few examples of employers' roles in implementing the FWA practice and

training programs for employees to utilize the new practice and to relieve their anxiety about adopting it. In addition, even though the government encourages organizations to adopt this practice from an organizational perspective, the role of one of the important domains for employees, home (family), was missing (e.g. family supports, breaking down patriarchal family culture, etc.). The change of people's perceptions on the issue would be intertwined with the complicated social, cultural, and political contexts with which they interact. In this sense, multilateral approaches by the government to realize the plans should be carefully considered.

Employers' Perspective. Brown et al. (2009) identified four barriers from the organizational perspective. They are: (a) difficulty with supervising employees, (b) concerns about treating employees equally, (c) possible employee complaints or liability, and (d) concerns about the reactions of clients and customers. In this view, the issue of disrupted relationships with colleagues and work performance is placed at the center. Moreover, FWA tends to be regarded as an accommodation rather than a management tool, which generates some concerns and leads to many organizations' hesitation in implementing an FWA program (Jeong, 2010).

Similarly, Korea has the same concerns in implementing FWA. One of the biggest roadblocks is a lack of understanding of employees' perceptions about FWA. Lack of such awareness could bring distrust between the employee and the employer, which may cause a failure in adopting the FWA practice. In particular, the concept of FWA is not only relatively new in the Korean workplace but also is less likely to be accepted in the organizational culture based on collectivism and long working hours (Chandra, 2012). To avoid misunderstanding of FWA by both parties, the FWA practice should be embedded in the

organizational culture (Cheon, 2010). Then, organizational leaders, managers, and HRD practitioners must take an educative role in fostering a climate in which FWA is positively received. In the process of plans, applications, and evaluations, both parties, the employer and the employee, need to continue communicating and discussing their individual concerns about and perceptions of FWA.

Additionally, from the organization's point of view, some organizations in Korea are concerned about the excessive expansion of employee's rights regarding their working scheduling and types. This is because if only employee-centered working schedules are emphasized, it would result in increasing employers' complaints about the management of their employees as well as the concerns about the burden of costs for the implementing of FWA. This would bring a negative operation to run FWA in the long term (KBS, 2014). This perspective implies not only consideration of an organization's financial plan to support FWA practice, but also the necessity of a compromise plan between both parties' (employer and employee) regarding the working schedule.

Employees' Perspective. Currently, employees in Korea have many concerns about the adoption of FWA. First, as stated earlier, employees' distrust and misconceptions of FWA is a critical issue. Some studies found that many workers hesitated to use it because of their perception that it might threaten their career progress (Allen, 2001; Fleetwood, 2007). Their fear of being physically absent and the disadvantages resulting from their absence from the workplace increases the negative perception of the FWA (Subramaniam, 2011). Employees believe their employer wants them to show their devotion at the expense of other life domains (Allen, 2001). Particularly, in the organizational culture in Korea, as many organizations want to identify employees' loyalty and solidarity toward their community

through a variety of forms (i.e. company dinners, drinking culture, etc.), there exists an invisible tension between the organizational provision of FWA and employees' perceptions. Under this situation, many employees are skeptical about whether or not the new organizational practice, FWA, can be viable and survive in reality (KBS, 2014). Thus, without active organizational efforts to break the existing authoritative and male-centered organizational culture, the implementation of FWA may encounter a big roadblock.

In addition, in terms of the government's plan of decent part-time jobs with FWA, the labor union in Korea has strongly criticized the plan. This is attributed to their concern that it may ultimately lead to a proliferation of irregular workers by having the decent hourly employment program in the public sector before expanding into the private sector. The labor union also questioned if the government had superficially put its efforts in increasing the employment rate to accomplish *The Roadmap to Achieve 70% Employment Rate* (Noh, 2014). The current concept of FWA proposed by the Korean government seems to be represented in transformed concepts of FWA, not completely following the traditional concepts (employees' choices and autonomy according to their different situations are considered in controlling time and space for their work) from the existing FWA practices in Western countries despite borrowing the concept (Duncan & Pettigrew, 2012; Hill, Yang, Hawkins, & Ferris, 2004). Rather, it takes a different form of FWA in that the government recruits those who will use FWA in the form of decent part-time jobs from the beginning. The problem is that the employees hired to do the jobs cannot have any opportunities to change their positions to regular workers. This would not be an authentic use of FWA for employees. It might arouse concerns that the decent part-time jobs could create another class

(decent part timer vs. regular workers) in the labor market, which may worsen the flexibility of the labor market (KBS, 2014).

In this sense, the governmental plan for FWA was critiqued by the labor union as a trick to create a number of jobs and sharing jobs. At this point, consensus from the government and employees and consideration of the quality of job creation should be critically discussed in the early stage of adopting FWA.

Theoretical Framework

In this section, theories guiding this study are introduced. It includes descriptions of each theory, the rationales for the selection of these theories, and the applications of these theories to my study. The leading theoretical frameworks for this study are as follows: Crenshaw's (1989) theory of intersectionality, Clark's (2000) work-family border theory, and Schein's (2004) theory of organizational culture. The three theories serve as the critical lenses from which to view the issues of FWA and WLB for the married career women in Korea. These theories are also presented in a synthesized framework at the end of this section.

Crenshaw's (1989) Intersectionality

Few studies have illuminated women's work-life balance from feminist perspectives. To understand work-life balance and married female employees, one must first look at the underlying cause of the problem. One of the central causes of the work-family conflict is that compared to men, women have more multiple roles assigned to them by traditional and industrial society (Rantanen, Kinnunen, Mauno, & Tillemann, 2011). This problem is connected with women's multiple identities formed by social structures. Therefore, the women's identities and experiences in different contexts need to be explored. In this sense,

the feminist theory of intersectionality is useful to understand the highly educated and married female employees' multiple identities in their intersectional contexts (with inherent barriers influenced by the social and cultural structure) and the women's unique experiences of subjectivity and oppression in the Korean context.

The term of intersectionality was first coined by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) when she discussed the multiple dimensions of Black women's employment experiences in the US. Since she introduced this concept in a session of the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) Forum in the World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) in September 2001 in Duraban, South Africa, the term has been widely used in various UN and NGO forums and has become a scholarly buzzword among feminist and anti-racist scholars for decades (Nash, 2008; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Now, this theory is a leading feminist paradigm and is considered as the most important theoretical contribution to women's studies (McCall, 2005).

This theory proposes that individuals simultaneously have multiple identities—such as race, gender, class, and sexuality—created by power and social structures. Due to overlapping identities, these individuals face intersectional forms of discrimination and subordination (Symington, 2004). The intersection of multiple identities marginalizes individuals, thus making them more vulnerable (Symington, 2004). Crenshaw's early notion of intersectionality focused more on the interplay of Black women's experiences in the labor market regarding race and gender. Later she expanded the need of intersectionality to explain different grounds of identity in the context where the social world is constructed (Crenshaw, 1991). In addition to the significance of the intersectional components of marginalized women's identities, this theory also highlights the full diversity of women's experiences (Center for Women's Global Leadership, 2001). Furthermore, the theory of intersectionality

attempts to dismantle women's group's homogeneity and underscores individuals' different experiences (Nash, 2008). Thus, intersectionality can be used to help provide deep insight into the discrimination faced by individuals at the fringes and, as a result, design informed policies and strategies to help them.

Likewise, the highly educated and married female employees in Korea are given a variety of titles, a worker, a wife, a mother, a daughter-in-law, and so forth. In the Korean society, these women feel much more pressure than men because of higher expectations about their multiple roles--traditional gender roles as well as professional employees equivalent to any other colleagues (males or single women)—at work and home in an atmosphere where the society expects them to be a *super woman* (Bae, 2010). If they do not work well in both domains, they would feel a great sense of frustration and end up working with serious work-life conflicts, or being forced to abandon their jobs voluntarily or involuntarily. When dealing with a group of married female employees with higher education, they should not be treated as a homogenous group of just well-educated, middle-class, and “pure-blood” Koreans regarding ethnicity or race. Instead they should be respected for their individuality and different experiences they have.

In using the theory, there might be a criticism that this theory is not appropriate for this study because of the traditional concept, which emphasized the marginalized with gender and race. However, in terms of the traditional intersectional theory, Nash (2008) raised some unresolved questions about intersectionality. Particularly, connected to this study, an important problem proposed by Nash is that Crenshaw's argument was exclusively focused on black women's identities constituted by race and gender, with little attention to other components such as nationality, sexuality, or class. Even though the intersectionality theory

originally stemmed from an interest in Black women's double burdens due to gender and race, the central interest in race and gender binary schemes is pointed out as a shortcoming. With requests from many scholars to expand the concept, later Crenshaw explained intersectionality with a focus on multiple grounds of identity out of the limited factors, race and gender (Nash, 2008).

Next, intersectionality has generally been opposed to imagining non-multiply marginalized subjects as central to its theoretical and political project (Kwan, 1996, cited in Nash, 2008). Because of that, little intersectional literature has focused on those that are wholly or even partially privileged. Here is another question, proposed by Nash (2008, p. 10), "Is intersectionality a theory of marginalized subjectivity or a generalized theory of identity?" Although intersectionality has been regarded as a useful theory for multiple oppressions of nonwhite and poor women, some scholars highlighted that the most important contribution of intersectionality theory is its general theory of identity (Nash, 2008).

Particularly, Zack (2005) stressed that all women are intersectional subjects because of the possibility that their womanhood (already a socially disadvantaged position) will intersect with other social positions to multiply disadvantage them (cited in Nash, 2008). Zack also proposed that some women's privileged experiences or contexts regarding class, sexuality, able-bodiedness, and so forth did not undermine all women's claims to intersectional identities. Aligned with Zack's work of intersectionality, Nash (2008) called on feminists and anti-racists to expand the concept of intersectionality by recognizing "the ways in which positions of dominance and subordination work in complex and intersecting ways to constitute subjects' experiences of personhood" (p. 10).

In line with the Nash and Zack's critical perspectives, the expanded concept of intersectionality which emphasizes one's personhood rather than a binary scheme (gender and race) can justify the application of intersectionality theory to my research target group, married female employees with higher education—those who have partially privileged positions regarding education and social positions. This can mitigate some expected criticisms of my target group; such as “Where is race?” or “Who is intersectional?” As an example of a study with the expanded intersectionality concept, Kynsilehto (2011) presented the trajectory of highly educated migrant Maghrebi women's experiences. Similarly, this study also aims to explore the highly educated and married female employees' multiple and complex identities in marginalized contexts (e.g. unequal working conditions, patriarchy in marital status, etc.) between work and home in Korea despite their partially privileged positions. In sum, although the main axes of intersectionality have been regarded as gender and race, there are many more complicated factors that marginalize women such as age, positioning in a family, single or married, with (even very young or not) or without children, and so forth. Thus, the intersectionality theory in this study is an attempt not only to expand beyond the relationship between gender and race which was the main axes of intersectionality but also to view the women's experiences with the advanced concept of intersectionality theory from a critical perspective.

Clark's (2000) Work-Family Border Theory

In order to understand work-life balance, which is one of the critical concepts in this study and related to the quality of lives of married Korean female employees, it is essential to understand the nature of work and life domains. In this sense, Clark's (2000) work-family border theory provides an ample understanding of the contexts of two different domains.

Much of research regarding work-life (family) balance have mainly focused on the empirical results about WLB programs (e.g. the relationship between job satisfaction, job performance and health, etc.) with little attention paid to theories about work and family (Kirchmeyer, 2000; Kofodimos, 1993). Consequently, even though the metaphor of balance is broadly used in everyday life, the definition is rarely situated in theory (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007). Because of that, the existing theories about WLB are very limited and are largely dependent on a few theories. They are: (a) human ecology theory (a systematic approach to the study of families); (b) spillover theory (one's emotions and behaviors in one sphere can affect another sphere negatively or positively; Duncan & Pettigrew, 2012; Rantanen, Kinnunen, Mauno, & Tillemann, 2011); (c) compensation theory (people are engaged in activities that satisfy their needs regarding what they are missing in another sphere; Clark, 2000); and (d) role balance theory in which "individuals prioritize roles hierarchically for organizing and managing multiple responsibilities" (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007, p. 456).

The main interest in the human ecology theory is the relationships between families and the economic environment with an emphasis on the interactions with people's earning and caring (Duncan & Pettigrew, 2012). In the spillover theory, compensation theory, and the role balance theory, the extent of individuals' involvement, including their attitudes, emotions, and efforts between work and home is emphasized. Particularly, as spillover and compensation often occur simultaneously within individuals, these theories can hardly explain the reason why people choose one reaction over another. These theories tend to rely on only emotional linkages with a lack of interest in "spatial, temporal, social, and behavioral connections between work and family" (Clark, 2000, p. 750). In the theories, individuals are

just treated as passive, not actively involved with changing their conditions. Because of the limitations, most studies on work and family have been conducted with no theoretical grounds, or have just focused on explaining research results without driving research questions (Clark, 2000). Because of the dearth of understanding of the relationships between the work and family domains, Clark (2000) demonstrated that the theories are not sufficient to predict the experiences of work-family conflict or to solve problems in trying to balance people's responsibilities.

With the need of an advanced work-family theory, Clark's work/family border theory provides a new work-family framework to explain the complicated interactions between the boundaries and to explore the context of each domain, work and family. Looking at the relationships between the different domains helps gain an insight into the anticipated conflict as well as acquiring balance from the domains. Clark's central point in this theory is that "individuals manage and negotiate their work and family spheres and the borders between them in order to attain balance" (Clark, 2000, p. 750). In this theory, *work* and *family* are located in distinctive domains or spheres because each has different rules, thought patterns and behaviors, and different ends and means. Despite the differences, *work* and *family* affect each other and people try to integrate these two different areas to some degree. Then, people become "daily border-crossers" coming and going between the domains.

In the work-family border theory, Clark created a number of propositions regarding how the experiences of work-family get underway. The leading concepts to support this theory are the following four: 1) the work and home domains, 2) the borders between work and home, 3) the border-crosser, and 4) the border-keepers and other important domain members.

First, *work* and *home* are two different **domains**. Each domain has different rules, thought patterns, behaviors, different ends and means, and culture. In the domains, people try to integrate or separate their two worlds to some extent.

Second, **borders** are “lines of demarcation between domains” (Clark, 2000, p. 756) and through the borders, one’s behavior begins or ends. The borders have three different types: physical, temporal and psychological. A physical border is a physical wall of a workplace or a home. Temporal borders determine when time is spent in each domain. Psychological borders are the rules and guidelines for appropriate behavior and thinking within each domain. Borders have some characteristics: permeability, flexibility, and blending. *Permeability* is “the degree to which elements from other domains may enter” (Clark, 2000, p. 756), which also can be psychological—psychological permeations (i.e. spillover of negative emotions and attitudes). This is one of the most important characteristics that explain the relationships between the two domains. *Flexibility* is “the extent to which a border may contract or expand, depending on the demands of one domain or the other” (Clark, 2000, p. 757). When the psychological border is flexible, individuals’ emotions, behaviors, and insights between the domains can freely come and go. *Blending* occurs “when a great deal of permeability and flexibility occurs around the border” (Clark, p. 757). In this situation, when there is no longer one dominant domain, blending occurs. This can also occur in a family-run business because family interactions can often affect work results. Then, combining permeability, flexibility, and blending decides *the strength of the border*—strong or weak. The status of a strong border is impermeable, inflexible, and never blending, and a weak border is the opposite. Therefore, borders can be differently formed depending on the extent of the flow of permeations from the domains.

Third, **border-crossers** are described by “the degree to which they are peripheral or central participants in the two domains” (Clark, 2000, p.759). While central participants tend to internalize the domain’s culture, have strong commitments with recognition of their responsibilities in either domain, peripheral participants have opposite characteristics, ignorance of domain norms, a lack of interplay with other members, and little sense of identification with domain responsibilities (Clark, 2000).

Lastly, **border-keepers** are those who are mainly representative in defining the domains and borders. For example, border-keepers at work in general would be supervisors and those at home would be spouses. **Other domain members** are those who would be influential but lack power over the border-crossers. Border-keepers and other domain members play a critical role in managing the domains and borders. In explaining this concept, Clark emphasized the importance of frequent communication between border-keepers and border-crossers to reduce role conflict caused by their different interests and understandings from each domain. That is, “communication with supervisors about family, and communication with family about work, can be an important way to mitigate work-family conflict” (Clark, 2000, p. 764).

In summary, Clark’s border theory has addressed what the previous research on work-family balance had missed, including the reasons why conflict exists and provisions of several propositions to encourage better balance between work and families. The border theory propositions have become a tool to help establish balance while Clark encouraged other researchers to interpret and measure the propositions for advanced research. In addition, the emphasis on communication and central participation in this theory, including developing relationships with others, can be used as an important strategy for work-family

balance. Connecting with work-life balance issues in Korea, Clark's academic contribution through the border theory is definitely useful not only in interpreting the complex interactions between work and life domains for married female employees in Korea, but also in providing a direction for work-life balance strategies from individual and organizational perspectives.

Schein's (2004) Organizational Culture Theory

As stated earlier, one of the primary interests of this study is to find how the highly educated and married Korean female employees feel about and experience a new organizational practice of FWA. The process of accepting a new practice into an organization often requires changes in people's perceptions and behaviors (usually encouraged by their organizations, supervisors, or managers; Burke, 2011). In the long term, it would also be connected with a paradigm shift in the concept of working time and space in Korea. When people are exposed to a new environment, they may feel anxious and unhappy about the changes because they feel comfortable with the existing culture and sometimes are uncomfortable with a focus overly oriented toward change for the sake of change without considering the individual employees (Smollan & Sayers, 2009). Thus, in discussing the nature of an organizational change, one of the most important factors to look at is the organization's culture (Burke, 2011). In this respect, Edgar Schein's (2004) theory of organizational culture provides a guidance not only to understand the complicated context of organizational culture but also to establish some strategies regarding the settlement of FWA in Korea. Although Schein's theory originated in the Western context, it still offers the universal concepts of and the nature of organizational culture, thus, it is appropriate to explicate those of the organizational culture in Korea as well.

According to Schein (2004), organizational culture is defined as the values, norms, customs, and assumptions held by people that serve as a guide to their behavior in sub-groups of a larger organization. Culture affects how people make decisions, treat others, and determine what is right and wrong. Likewise, since culture is a set of basic assumptions to determine how people behave in an organization (Burke, 2011), a deeper understanding of organizational culture needs to be developed.

To understand organizational culture, Schein (2004) identified three levels, which he illustrated using a cultural iceberg or onion—its artifacts, its espoused beliefs and values, and its basic underlying assumptions. First, artifacts refer to the surface observations in an organization such as technology, products, language, manners of human interactions, mode of dress, rituals, and ceremonies. Although it is easy to see and sense, artifacts provide only fragmentary knowledge of understanding culture. Therefore, Schein called for the need for understanding two additional levels. Espoused beliefs and values are the certain things about “the shared social experience of a group” (Schein, 2004, p. 29). This usually happens in the process of solving a problem and dealing with a major issue between leaders and followers by interacting and communicating with each other. For example, although a leader can first propose an idea or a solution about an issue, until the group members buy into the suggestion in reality, it would remain just what the leader proposed without further progression. In this sense, Schein called this common belief and behavior *social validation*. Thus, this second level is particularly useful in understanding organizational members’ intentions (Burke, 2011). Basic underlying assumptions are below the conscious, obvious artifacts, and what people espouse. This level has the following characterized behaviors: “1) hardly if ever discussed, 2) taken for granted, and 3) based on repeated successes—these behaviors ‘work’

for us whether ‘work’ means to be embraced or avoided” (Burke, 2011, p. 235). The existence of this level makes it extremely difficult to change organizational culture. Because of that, in order to change the basic assumptions, there must be critical reflection and reassessment of people’s shared beliefs.

In addition, regarding a successful change of organizational culture, Schein (2004, p. 32) pointed out the two key solutions: 1) the management of the large amounts of anxiety that accompany any relearning at this level, and 2) the assessment of whether the genetic potential for the new learning is even present. These two strategies are very meaningful in that they can provide a direction in the process of accepting a new organizational culture and institutionalizing it in the organization. Similarly, for a successful change of culture, the Korean society also needs to think about leaders’ roles to reduce potential anxiety and reexamination of the existing organizational culture, and learning a new belief and culture.

In summary, an organization’s culture can be understood at three levels. To deeply understand an organizational culture, it is necessary to know the last level because “we can only interpret the meaning of artifacts and give credence to espoused beliefs and values by knowing, at least to some extent, the pattern of basic underlying assumptions” (Burke, 2011, p. 236). Through the theory, Schein (2004) demonstrated how difficult it is to change organizational culture without challenging the basic yet often unknown underlying assumptions. As a result, it may take a while for an organizational culture to change. Yet, ironically, without touching the last level, organizational change will unlikely take place.

Thus, it is a challenge faced by HRD professionals and it is incumbent upon them to understand the different layers and get to the bottom of the iceberg in an organization. Despite the challenge, it is still very meaningful that Schein emphasized the three layers of

corporate culture and a leader's instrumental role in creating and managing organizational culture. Therefore, in Korean organizations where a top-down and authoritative culture dominants, serious consideration must be given to the underlying assumptions and leaders' roles in shaping and reshaping the organizational culture before FWA are taken into account.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed the literatures related to the conditions of Korean married female employees with higher education, the Korean social and organizational culture (e.g. long working hours, hierarchical culture and collectivism, and patriarchal culture and gender inequality), the issues of WLB and FWA (including different stakeholders' perspectives on WLB and FWA), and the three theories guiding this study. One of the important points in the chapter is to understand the women's inherent social and cultural barriers regarding their career lives in South Korea. In addition, this chapter also emphasizes that FWA and WLB practices should be designed and implemented based on a solid understanding of the Korean national and organizational context.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

This chapter introduces the methodology and methods used in this study. It consists of the following areas: restatement of the purpose and the research question, a rationale for the use of qualitative research, epistemological stances of qualitative inquiry, methods, the role of the researcher, trustworthiness, and ethical consideration. In particular, in the methodology section, the phenomenological study will be described in depth as the approach adopted for this study. Additionally, the method section will deal with techniques for sampling, data collection, and data analysis.

Restatement of the Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of the highly educated and married female Korean employees with WLB and FWA in the Korean context. The following three research questions were examined:

1. What are the experiences of the highly educated and married Korean female employees with work-life balance?
2. What are the experiences of the highly educated and married Korean female employees with flexible workplace arrangements?
3. How do flexible workplace arrangements impact the work-life balance of the highly educated and married Korean female employees?

Rationale for Qualitative Research

Methodology is “the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired

outcomes” (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). It provides the theoretical perspective that connects an interpretive research question with a particular method. For this study, qualitative inquiry is selected as the methodology. Qualitative research is particularly beneficial in that it can give insight about marginalized, stereotyped, or unknown populations by providing them with an opportunity to tell their stories that few know about (Tracy, 2013). An essential characteristic of qualitative research is that individuals construct their own realities through interaction with their social world. One of the central interests of a qualitative researcher is to understand the meaning a phenomenon has for those involved (Merriam, 2002). Crotty (1998) explained that “meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting” (p. 42). Therefore, the concept of the self in qualitative research is very important because the meaning of one’s experience is formed by the subject’s interplay with others and the society. For this reason, the qualitative approach helps individuals understand the world, the society, and institutions, thereby offering knowledge that targets social issues, questions, or problems (Tracy, 2013).

Hence, qualitative researchers are interested in three areas of inquiry: (a) how individuals interpret their experiences, (b) how individuals construct their worlds, and (c) what meaning individuals attribute to their experiences (Merriam, 2009). In summary, the primary focus of all qualitative research is to understand how meaning is constructed and how people make sense of their lives and their experiences, thereby pursuing to uncover and interpret these meanings (Merriam, 2009). Because of these characteristics, qualitative research is considered as a set of interpretative activities (Lincoln & Denzin, 2005).

In line with qualitative researchers’ interests, my main interest in this study is to understand married female employees’ experiences with FWA and WLB through their

interaction with their workplaces and homes. I hope to gain a deep insight into the dynamics and interactive processes of their experiences and perceptions within their two different domains, work and home. Such a goal cannot be accomplished through statistical numbers and surveys in a quantitative approach that stresses the measurement and analysis of casual relationships between variables (Lincoln & Denzin, 2005). This is because work-family issues vary and are complicated due to the women's' different experiences, perceptions, conditions, and situations. Moreover, even though there are some numerical records of the usage of FWA in organizations in Korea, the superficial numbers provide us with little information on how this practice has been implemented and well embedded in reality. For all these reasons, I consider qualitative approaches more appropriate in explaining married female employees' unique experiences, behaviors, and feelings, and how they interpret the world around them (Merriam, 2009).

Epistemological Underpinnings of Qualitative Research

Paradigms are referred to as “preferred ways of understanding reality, building knowledge, and gathering information about the world” (Tracy, 2013, p. 38). Depending on the basis of ontology (the nature of reality), epistemology (the nature of knowledge), and axiology (the values associated with areas of research and theorizing), a researcher's paradigm is different. Such paradigm difference leads to different methodological choices. Because of the nature of paradigm, the different world of views, it is critical that the researcher articulates his or her philosophical stance and its potential influence on the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 2009; Tracy, 2013).

In understanding the philosophical positioning, four types of assumptions are usually projected according to the purpose of, types of research, and the views of reality. They are:

positivist/post-positivist, interpretive, critical, and postmodern/post-structural (Merriam, 2009). First, the positivistic/post-positivist perspective assumes that there is reality which is observable, experimentally measured, and examined. The purpose of here is to predict and generalize the phenomenon, thus the quantitative research methodology is often adopted (Merriam, 2009). Second, from the perspective of interpretivism (also known as social constructivism), the social reality is regarded as “the product of process by which social actors together negotiate the meanings for actions and situations” (Blaikie, 1993, p. 96). Therefore, there is no single reality but multiple realities or interpretations about a phenomenon. From this view, people have subjective meanings of their experiences through the interaction and the negotiation with the surroundings (Creswell, 2007). Most of qualitative research is informed by this worldview. The third perspective is critical perspective. The key purpose is to change the *status quo* and challenge power embedded in the social and cultural structure. It pursues beyond disclosing people’s understandings of their world (Merriam, 2009). Last, unlike the previous assumptions, the postmodern/post-structural perspective questions that “there is a place where reality resides” (Merriam, 2009, p. 11); instead it argues for multiple *truths*, not a single *truth*. Thus, this perspective sets a high value on the diversity and plurality of the world.

My Philosophical Assumption

My philosophical assumption is grounded in interpretivism (or social constructivism). I do not believe reality is something “out there”; instead, I believe both reality and knowledge are constantly constructed and re-established through interaction and communication. Hence, I, the researcher, as a mediator, can not only actively involve with the process of acquiring knowledge about reality but also gain insight into different points of

views from diverse participants who answer my questions (Tracy, 2013). In this respect, the interpretive worldview is suited for this study in that my research interest is to look at the experiences and perceptions of the highly educated and married female employees about FWA in the Korean context regarding work-life balance. Accordingly, the main focus of this study is to make sense of their experiences from their stances, identifying their behaviors, intentions, and emotions (Tracy, 2013). Thus, in this study, I carry on the assumption that “human activity is not regarded as a tangible material reality to be discovered and measured, rather it is considered to be a ‘text’ that can be read, interpreted, deconstructed, and analyzed” (Tracy, 2013, p. 41). Therefore, the findings from the participants would be the socially constructed products through language, interaction, and negotiation with the other actors or the society during the research process.

Methodology: Phenomenology

The methodology I used to conduct this study is phenomenology. The term, phenomenology, originated from the Greek words *phainomenon* and *logos*, which refer to the activities of giving an account and a *logos* about a variety of phenomena and ways in which things can happen (Sokolowski, 2000). In addressing the question about what a phenomenon is in phenomenology, Vagle (2014) pointed out two characteristics—manifesting and appearing—to define a phenomenon. Understood from the first characteristic, *manifesting*, phenomena are “the ways in which we find ourselves being in relation to the world throughout day-to-day living” (Vagle, 2014, p. 20). Phenomenologists are interested in identifying relationships with others by finding ourselves. In other words, phenomenologists believe that individuals *find themselves in* the experience by experiencing the world itself, rather than that people construct a phenomenological experience (Vagle, 2014). Thus, phenomena are

something brought into being through our living in the world, becoming manifest for us. The latter characteristic of *appearing* is influenced by Descartes' way of thinking, "appearances were merely creations in the mind and could not really be thought of as real, living, and moving in and through the world (Vagle, 2014, p. 22). Here, consciousness resided in one's mind is highlighted because meanings about a phenomenon are created in the mind. In this sense, phenomenologists are interested in studying "how a particular phenomenon manifests and appears in the lifeworld" (Vagle, 2014, p. 23), rather than focusing on getting inside other people's minds. In summary, the primary interests of phenomenology are the experience itself, and how the experience is reconstructed through social interaction with the influence of the participant's consciousness (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009).

There are two primary and long-standing approaches to phenomenology: hermeneutical and transcendental (or psychological). First, hermeneutical phenomenology, originally proposed by Van Manen (1990) in the early 1990s, pays particular attention to the interpretations of the *texts* of one's experiences as well as descriptions about one's lived experience. In the process of doing a hermeneutical phenomenological study, a researcher plays an important role as a meditator in interpreting the lived experiences (Creswell, 2007). Along with the interest in describing the participants' experiences, this approach focuses on the interpretation to make the meaning of the experiences.

On the other hand, transcendental phenomenology, demonstrated by Moustakas (1994), is particularly interested in the descriptions of the participants' experiences, not focusing on the researcher's interpretations. The original meaning of *transcendental* is "everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34). In line with this concept, Husserl's idea, *epoche* (or bracketing), suspending the researcher's

judgement toward the participants' experiences, is taken as a base of this approach to capture a fresh aspect underlying the phenomenon. In addition to *epoche*, the process in the transcendental phenomenology includes a textual description of the individuals' significant experiences which were reduced by the researcher in the analysis of data. It also consists of a structural description involving their specific contexts or situations. Thus, this approach emphasizes demonstrating one's *essence* of the experiences with more structured procedures (Moustakas, 1994).

It is the above mentioned characteristics that make the phenomenological design suitable for this study. My research interest was to illuminate the highly educated and married female employees' *lived experiences* with WLB and FWA in the Korean context, not making a category of the women's experiences, or generalizing them to make a laws (Merriam, 2009). For this study, I especially took the transcendental phenomenology. This is because this approach is more suited for discovering the essential and diverse features of the participants' vivid experiences rather than focusing on the interpretations of their experiences.

Methods

In this section, I introduce the different research methods I used in this study. They include methods for sampling, data collection, data analysis and strategies for ensuring the rigor of my research findings.

Sampling Procedure

Having a sampling plan is very important because it guides a researcher's choice of sources for data, which includes specific sites, times, a variety of events, and activities occurring in the fieldwork (Tracy, 2013). Generally, two types of sampling exist: probability

sampling and nonprobability sampling. The former also known as random sampling, is utilized when the goal is to generalize results from a study; thus it is widely used in quantitative research. On the other hand, nonprobability sampling, also called purposeful sampling, is mostly used in qualitative studies that aim to “solve qualitative problems, such as discovering what occurs, the implications of what occurs, and the relationships linking occurrences” (Honingmann, 1982, p. 84). When discussing about the quality of good qualitative research, Tracy (2013) noted that the use of purposeful sampling would be one of the criteria because the investigator can gain more insight from the participants by selecting samples that meet the criteria of the research questions and purposes. In this study, I used purposeful sampling to guide my selection of the participants.

Miles & Huberman (1994) identified sixteen types of purposeful sampling strategies. Among them, three methods were particularly useful to my study. They are: (a) criterion sampling, (b) snowball or chain sampling, and (c) maximum variation sampling. First, using pre-determined criteria is appropriate to a phenomenological study in that all participants experience a common phenomenon being studied, which becomes an important criterion (Creswell, 2007). In the process of making a criterion-based selection, the researcher needs to establish a criterion or a set of criteria, that is, to develop an appropriate list with critical attributes derived from the research purpose, and then seek participants meeting those attributes (Merriam, 2009). This strategy enables the researcher to find information-rich cases who can provide essential information or deep insights into the research inquiry (Patton, 2002).

Second, snowball sampling is a method of expanding the pool by asking a participant to recommend others who fit the study’s criteria (Babbie, 1995). It is known to be a useful

tool for studying structured social networks and the marginalized people because of the advantage to reach and find the hidden population. However, one disadvantage of this method is that researchers are more likely to have a stereotyped group when participants introduce others who are similar to themselves (Tracy, 2013). To control this potential bias, I also utilized a maximum sampling technique. This method not only considers participants' diverse variations but also identifies their common patterns (Creswell, 2007). Through the maximum variation, I recruited participants from diverse contexts.

Regarding the sample size for a qualitative study, there are no “magic numbers” of research participants (Vagle, 2014). Nevertheless, there are some suggestions proposed by qualitative researchers. For example, Vagle (2014) emphasized that a phenomenologist should focus more on how to handle the phenomenon studied, rather than being restrained by the number of participants. Dahlberg et al. (2008) suggested a yardstick, “the more complex a phenomenon, the larger the group of informants” (p. 175). Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended using the level of saturation of the information as a decision point, that is, to terminate sampling “when no new information is forthcoming from new sampled units” (p. 202). Therefore, *redundancy or saturation* becomes the essential criterion. Despite lack of universally agreed number for the sample size, usually ten participants are encouraged in a phenomenological study (Creswell, 2007).

In summary, I adopted criterion, snowball, and maximum variation sampling methods. Using these methods, I recruited sixteen married female Korean employees with higher education (a bachelor degree and above) who have experienced the flexible workplace arrangements. Moreover, in order to gain to a holistic understanding of WLB and FWA

experiences, I focused on recruiting women with diverse backgrounds (e.g., different organizational types, family types, and with or without kids).

Data Collection

Data collection is a series of activities involving with “asking, watching, and reviewing” (Merriam, 2009, p. 85). The general tools for qualitative researchers to collect data are interviews, observation, document analysis, and the use of physical artifacts (Merriam, 2002; 2009). The researcher needs to determine the most appropriate methods of data collection and analysis techniques based on the type of the research questions being asked. Therefore, “what questions are asked, what is observed, and what documents are deemed relevant will depend on the disciplinary theoretical framework of the study” (Merriam, 2009, p. 23). In this study I relied on two main methods for data collection: interviews and observations.

Interviews. According to DeMarrais (2004), an interview is defined as “a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study” (p. 55). The important purpose of an interview is to acquire some special information and it is needed when the researcher wants to know how people make sense of the world around them (Merriam, 2009). Another importance of the interview is that it creates a story and makes a meaning through the activity based on the active interaction and negotiation (Tracy, 2013). Particularly, what a phenomenologist should keep in mind is that even if one interview seems to be similar to another, every interview is valuable and offers unique lessons. This is attributed to the nature of phenomenology--the purpose is not to experiment and compare the individuals, but to catch the phenomenon from *each particular participant* (Tracy, 2013).

In this study, I used individual, face-to-face, semistructured, open-ended, and in-depth interviews with the aid of a pre-developed interview guide (see Appendix D). Face-to-face interviews are useful to build up rapport and to gather both verbal and nonverbal data (Tracy, 2013). The semi-structure of an interview combines structured and unstructured questions, and has a much greater extent of flexibility in interviews, including flexible wordings in all of the questions and a mixture of somewhat structured questions. To ensure the effectiveness of the interviews, Taylor and Bogdan (1984) recommended five key components for consideration. In conducting the interviews, I tried to faithfully follow Taylor and Bogdan's (1984) suggestions:

1. The investigator's motives and intentions and the inquiry's purpose
2. The protection of respondents through the use of pseudonyms
3. Deciding who has final say over the study's content
4. Payment (if any)
5. Logistics with regard to time, place, and number of interviews to be scheduled

(pp. 87-88)

Most of the participants were recruited through my personal networks, and some of my interviewees introduced other participants for this study. Before the interviews, for the participants' convenience, I let them choose the interview sites and times. Their most preferred places were coffee shops or restaurants near their companies, or reception rooms in their companies. The interviews were usually conducted during their lunch hours or sometimes after work because most participants had to leave their offices on time to take care of their children. During the interviews, I tape-recorded the interviews with the participants' consent and combined the tapes with notes to support the tape recording and observations of

the participants' behaviors. Each interview lasted between 50 to 123 minutes. All the interviews were conducted in Korean and transcribed verbatim in Korean by the researcher, and then only data needed to support findings were translated into English by the researcher. After the interview, each participant's transcript was shared with the participant to verify accuracy. I also had my peer debriefer, who could speak both English and Korean, check the translation accuracy. When needed, I conducted a shorter follow-up interview face-to-face, or by text message, phone call, or email to ask additional questions or for clarification.

Observation. In the process of collecting data, interviews were mingled with observation. An important purpose of observation is to find some knowledge of the context or to offer specific incidents and behaviors that can be references for following interviews. In addition, it is a useful tool to understand ill-defined phenomena as well (Merriam, 2009). Last, "observation will be the best technique to use when an activity, event, or situation can be observed firsthand, when a fresh perspective is desired, or when participants are not able or willing to discuss the topic under study" (Merriam, 2002, p. 13).

To maximize the results of the observations, I utilized field notes, which are similar to the interview transcript. According to Merriam (2009), field notes usually include the following components:

1. Verbal descriptions of the setting, the people, the activities
2. Direct quotations or at least the substance of what people said
3. Observer's comments—put in the margins or in a running narrative and identified by underlining, italics, bolding, or bracketing, and the initials "OC" (p. 131)

Thus, field notes should be highly descriptive, which means that sufficient detail should be included so that readers can feel as if they were there and see what the observer sees

(Merriam, 2009). Field notes should also be reflective including personal experiences, hunches, and things learned (Creswell, 2007). However, during the interviews, there was sometimes limited time for to write the field notes depending on the place where the interview occurred or if I judged the participants felt uncomfortable or distracted by my note-taking. Specifically, it was hard for me to observe the participants' real office dynamics because my access to their offices was often limited during their work hours, or the interviews were mostly conducted during their lunch hours. Nevertheless, in order to faithfully compile the field notes, I arrived early at the interview sites to observe the participants' companies and office settings and mostly completed the field notes after the interviews.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is as “the process of making sense out of the data” (Merriam, 2009, p. 175). It is usually connected with how the researcher creates categories or themes and interprets them (Merriam, 2009). Smith, Floweres, & Larkin (2009) emphasized the characteristics of analysis focusing on an iterative process of fluid descriptions and involvement with the transcript. Additionally, they stated, “Analysis is open to change and it is only ‘fixed’ through the action of writing up” (p. 81). One of the most important things in the phenomenological analysis is to find out “the essence or basic structure of a phenomenon” (Merriam, 2009, p. 199). In order to do so, I involved in *epoche* or bracket, which is one of the distinctive techniques of phenomenology. *Epoche* is the process in which the researcher sets aside his or her prejudices, assumptions, and judgements by *bracketing out* his/her personal experience with the phenomenon. Doing so allows the researcher to explore his or her consciousness in the mind (Merriam, 2008; Tracy, 2013).

In analyzing and presenting data collected, I followed Creswell's (2007) six steps. Table 1 presents the summary of Creswell's guidelines.

Table 1.

Data Analysis and Representation

| Phase of Data Analysis | Description |
|------------------------------|--|
| 1. Data managing | Create and organize files for data |
| 2. Reading, memoing | Read through text, make margin notes, form initial codes |
| 3. Describing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe personal experiences through epoche • Describe the essence of the phenomenon |
| 4. Classifying | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop significant statements • Group statements into meaning units |
| 5. Interpreting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a textural description, "What happened" • Develop a structural description, "How" the phenomenon was experienced • Develop the "essence" |
| 6. Representing, visualizing | Present narration of the "essence" of the experience; in tables, figures, or discussion |

Source: Creswell. (2007, pp. 156-157)

Steps 1, 2, and 3 are related to creating the phenomenology database at the initial stages of analysis before the actual analysis. In **the data managing phase (Step 1)**, I created each participant's individual files which include all the information about the individuals (i.e. demographic information, key contents of their interviews, transcript, etc.) and organized them. During Step 2, the phase of **the reading and memoing**, I carefully read all the documents collected and re-read them to uncover key concepts and patterns. Following

Smith, Flowers, and Larkin's (2009) suggestion in this stage, I read each participant's transcript in the first reading while listening to the audio-recording. Additionally, some effective techniques such as open-coding and color-coding were employed, including careful note taking and marking of excerpts having initial meanings. **Step 3, *describing***, was involved in the researcher's full description of his or her own experiences of the phenomenon, called *epoche*, to bracket out my assumptions of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Accordingly, in this stage, I reflected and described my experiences as much as I could as a highly educated and married Korean employee, with WLB and FWA. The phase of **step 4, *classifying*** focused on developing significant statements from the data to bring important meanings about the phenomenon. Using the method of *horizontalization*, all the data were treated as having equal value. Then, the creation of "meaning units" or themes--grouping them into larger units of information—was achieved (Creswell, 2007). In **Step 5, *interpreting***, a textual description (about what experiences the participants had) and a structural description (about how the experiences occurred) was developed. Based on them, the "essence" of the experiences was identified. In the last stage, **Step 6, *representing and visualizing***, the "essence" of the experiences acquired from the previous stage was represented in narrative format with the use of some forms such as tables, figures, or discussion. In the final report, the participants' privacy was protected by using pseudonyms and the information (e.g. name, affiliation, and other identifiable information) collected through the interviews was shielded in the study. Also, the findings resulted from analysis were shared by the participants.

Role of the Researcher

In a qualitative study, a researcher plays an important role as the primary instrument

of data collection and analysis. Moreover, the researcher's role is more empathized in a phenomenological study because of the particular technique, *epoche*, as stated earlier. In this sense, it is very important to explore my background, education, and career to facilitate the understanding of this study and my positionality as a researcher.

Positionality: My Experiences, Education, and Career Life

I was born in a small city in South Korea, the middle daughter, with an older and younger sister. Thanks to the composition of my family, who consists of four women and one man (my father), and parents who sincerely respected our thoughts, we were allowed to behave and think freely without any social constraints, at least at home, in the conservative Korean society. Since my childhood years, many women-friendly environments were inadvertently given to me in various ways. The main reason may be attributed to my educational background of attending all female schools from middle school to even graduate school (for my master's) in Korea. These environments made me naturally gravitate toward gender issues, and encouraged me to ask questions such as, "Why are women treated differently in this society?" "How should I live as a woman in this world?" As an effort to find the answers, I double majored in gender studies with my original major, politics, during my undergraduate years. After receiving my master's degree in political science, I worked as a researcher at the Human Resource Development Center for Women, coordinating some conferences and publishing national reports about the utilization of Asian women's talent, women's network, and their empowerment. Then, since starting my Ph. D. program, I have mainly studied career development for minorities (e.g. immigrant women, seniors, and career-interrupted women).

Currently, I am assuming multiple roles in life as a wife, a mom of two (very young)

daughters, and a Ph. D. student. My marriage and birth of my children have drastically reshaped my life, particularly, regarding my career development, its continuation, and balance between study (or work) and family. Given the multiple roles, I have often experienced internal conflicts between home and school (or workplace). In this situation, I thought that time may be differently applied to the lives of males and females in social and cultural contexts. Because of the different social time given to gender, women are more likely to be situated in the vulnerable position regarding their career development. Also, I have seen many Korean female friends with higher education abandon their jobs due to their work-life conflict. As a working mom, I sincerely empathized with their situations. Thus, my research interests in the highly educated and married female employees, and their work-life balance are rooted in my personal background.

It is the similar experience I shared with my study participants that enabled me to put myself in their position during the interview and to share part of my life if needed. Such shared experiences also allowed me to better interact with and empathize with the individuals in my study, ultimately offering my goal. Therefore, I considered myself as an emotional supporter, a good listener, a good communicator, and a woman with similar situations beyond a researcher. This means that I considered the women as main actors in a collaborative work, not as just a one-sided object of my study.

Trustworthiness

Regardless of the type of methodologies, qualitative or quantitative, studies must be conducted in a rigorous manner to impact the practice and advance theory/research (Merriam, 2009). In this sense, validity and reliability are primary concerns that should be addressed in the entire process of research design. In naturalistic inquiry, the terms of validity

and reliability are replaced with alternative terms. While many criteria have been proposed for evaluating qualitative studies, the most widely used ones were proposed by Lincon and Guba (1985). They are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). In the following subsections, I provide a brief summary of each criterion, followed by the strategies I used to ensure trustworthiness for this study.

Credibility

Credibility is associated with the level of congruence with research findings and reality; it addresses internal validity (Lincon & Guba, 1985). An important assumption of qualitative research is the existence of multiple realities. As an objective truth or reality cannot be identified in qualitative research, several strategies have been suggested to strengthen the credibility (Merriam, 2009). First, *Triangulation*, one of the most popular strategies, is using multiple sources of data, including the use of several sampling strategies, multiple investigators, or various theories. Second, *member checks* (or respondent validation), a strategy of asking participants for their feedback on the findings, are commonly used as well. Other methods include *adequate engagement in data collection* (researchers' efforts to get fully "saturated" data), *researcher's position or reflexivity* (critical self-reflection regarding assumptions, worldview, biases, theoretical aspects, etc.), and *peer review/examination* (discussion with colleagues regarding the research process, findings, and interpretation; Merriam, 2009).

Transferability

Transferability is involved with the concept of external validity in quantitative research, which is about the generalizability, that is, how much of the findings from a study can be applied to other situations. Yet, as the concept of generalizability is a philosophical

underpinning in quantitative research, an alternative term was proposed for qualitative research, transferability (Lincon & Guba, 1985). The generalizability in qualitative research is related to the readers' perspective of the study, allowing the readers to appreciate the findings of a study and applying them to their own situations (Merriam, 2009; Tracy, 2013). Regarding the enhancement of transferability, two strategies are most widely used: *thick description*, and *maximum variation sampling*. Thick description gives the readers a highly detailed description about the findings, and maximum variation sampling, as stated previously, is a purposeful sampling strategy that enhances diversity of the sample selected.

Dependability

Dependability is an alternative to reliability in qualitative research. Reliability refers to the extent to which research findings can get the same results despite the iterated trials (Merriam, 2009). However, as qualitative researchers aim to describe and understand the participants and their world, reliability is an inappropriate criterion (Wolcott, 2009). Instead, qualitative researchers recommended focusing on the consistency of the findings, which is also referred to as dependability (Lincon & Guba, 1985). Regarding the issues of dependability, one of the best strategies is to make a qualified qualitative researcher as a more reliable instrument through training and practice (Merriam, 2009). Additionally, an *audit trail* can be a good strategy for increasing dependability. This method provides a more detailed account of the use of methods, procedures, and other sources. In this process, the researcher is strongly encouraged to write a research journal or memos to record his/her reflections, questions, and the decisions related to the research process and analysis.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the findings of a study can be confirmed

by other researchers. This concept is similar to objectivity in quantitative research. In order to improve confirmability, multiple techniques can be combined such as triangulation, audit trail, and confirmability audit. Confirmability audit is associated with external audits, inviting a researcher who is not involved in the process of research to examine the process and the findings of the study.

My Strategies for Trustworthiness

The four aspects mentioned above to ensure trustworthiness were be fully embedded in the entire process of my study. To enhance credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, I utilized multiple techniques, including triangulation, member checks, adequate engagement in data collection, reflexivity, audit trail, thick descriptions, and maximum variation sampling. Particularly, by using a research journal, a method of audit trail, I reflected on and report the whole process, analysis, interpretation, and decision regarding my research. Through the use of these multiple strategies, I actively involved in creating a good qualitative study in a rigorous manner.

Ethical Considerations

While doing a qualitative study, a researcher would encounter many ethical issues. As the researcher's ethics considerably affects the trustworthiness of a study (Merriam, 2009), they should be carefully considered and adequately addressed. Patton (2002) provided a "Ethical Issues Checklist" as follows: 1) Explaining the purpose of the inquiry and methods to be used, 2) Promises and reciprocity, 3) Risk assessment, 4) Confidentiality, 5) Informed consent, 6) Data access and ownership, 7) Interviewer mental health, 8) Advice (who will be your counselor on ethical matters), 9) Data collection boundaries, and 10) Ethical versus legal conduct. I faithfully followed the Patton's (2002) ethical checklist during my entire

research. Before starting the fieldwork, I followed the instructions by Texas A&M University Institutional Review Board (IRB). During the fieldwork, if needed, I had my dissertation chair as a primary counselor to discuss any emerging ethical issues. Most of all, my priority was to respect the participants from their perspectives. Throughout this research, I was highly aware that no matter how well-developed the guidelines, and codes of ethics were, the real practice of ethics would largely depends on the investigator's own perspectives, values, and decisions (Merriam, 2009). I tried my best to be sensitive to ethical issues during my research.

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the methodology and methods I used for this study. Particularly, it discussed the appropriateness of a qualitative approach in particular, the phenomenological design. With the statement of my philosophical underpinning, I also described the entire process of this study, including the detailed plans for sampling, data collection, and data analysis. Finally, I articulated my role as a researcher, and addressed trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of the highly educated and married female Korean employees with WLB and the influence of FWA on their WLB in South Korea. In order to discover the participants' vivid and essential experiences, I adopted a phenomenological approach. The following three research questions guided this study:

1. What are the experiences of the highly educated and married Korean female employees with work-life balance?
2. What are the experiences of the highly educated and married Korean female employees with flexible workplace arrangements?
3. How do flexible workplace arrangements impact the work-life balance of the highly educated and married Korean female employees?

In order to address these questions, I interviewed sixteen Korean women who were highly educated and married employees and had experiences with a flexible workplace arrangement in South Korea. These interviews generated 289 pages of data, which were transcribed verbatim in Korean by me. Then, I translated the participants' representative quotes associated with the findings into English.

In this chapter, I present superordinate and associated themes related to the research questions. In order to understand the participants' unique backgrounds and support the evidences of major themes regarding their experiences about WLB and FWA, I start this chapter with a brief description of the FWA identified by my 16 participants, followed by an

introduction to each participant. Each participant's name was protected by a pseudonym. The participants' quotes used in the findings were identified by my own codes. For example, a code "2ID10" means: 2=the sequence of my interview; ID=the interviewee; 10=the number of the page in the transcript.

Descriptions of Participants' Flexible Workplace Arrangements

I interviewed sixteen Korean married women employees with higher education who had or have experienced flexible workplace arrangements. Although the specific operational policies of FWA (e.g. the limited time slots for the choice of work schedule, announcement system by employees, approval system of their supervisors for the usages of FWA, etc.) were different depending on the participants' organizational systems; the FWA they utilized were generally classified into the following four types: a) staggered work hours, b) telecommuting, c) reduced work hours—part-time work, and d) full time part-time.

First, *staggered work hours*, comprehensively called flextime in South Korea, refers to a work schedule that allows employees to choose the starting and ending times for the work day with the agreement of an employer/supervisors, based on a 40-hour work week. In this arrangement, while employees can choose their daily-based work schedules, the same amount of daily or weekly work hours is still given to them. This is the most frequently used arrangement in current Korean organizations. In this respect, the majority of my participants, nine out of sixteen, used staggered work hours.

Second, *telecommuting* is a work arrangement that allows employees to regularly work at home or at another preferred location during part or all of a work schedule. In my study, the three users of telecommuting among the four participants, except for Herim, worked at foreign companies. All of the three participants reported that their foreign

companies have more of a variety of options for FWA than Korean organizations, and telecommuting was commonly utilized in their companies. On the other hand, in Herim's case, telecommuting was not an official flexible workplace arrangement but was temporarily used in place of her parental leave.

Third, although there are various types of *reduced work hours*, including part-time work, job sharing, phased retirement, and part-year work, in my study, the type of reduced work hours utilized by the participants was limited to part-time work because the other types have not yet been introduced in Korea. The reduced work hours-part time work is a work schedule in which employees normally work fewer than 35 hours per week on a regular basis (Sloan Center on Aging and Work, n.d.). Yet, according to the Equal Employment Act (2016) in Korea, employees who utilize this practice should work from 15 to 30 hours per week. This arrangement is largely provided by law to employees during pregnancy or the early parenting period. Three of my participants used this arrangement.

Last, *full time part-time work*, called "Happy Employee" in my study, refers to a work schedule that is less than full-time but is at least half of the regularly scheduled full time. The operational concept is the same as the schedule with reduced work hours-part-time work. However, this arrangement is a very unique form of employment in Korea in that it was initiated for the first time by the Korean government as a national policy to create a decent job for career-interrupted women. Compared to the traditional part-time work schedule method, employees who use this arrangement are full-time employees who receive the same welfare benefits, including four major insurance benefits, as full-time employees working 40 hours a week. However, as these people were recruited as full time part-timers from the beginning, certain job characteristics such as promotions or changing position or

department were not clearly guaranteed and specified at the current stage. Jiu was the only participant using this arrangement.

Table 2 provides the descriptions of each FWA type and the participants who used a particular FWA.

Table 2.

Types of Flexible Workplace Arrangements Used by Participants

| Types | Descriptions | Users |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Staggered Work Hours (flextime*) | A work schedule that allows employees to choose the starting and ending times of the working day, within limits set by one's supervisor/manager. | Ayoung, Bokyung, Chaeock, Dajung, Eunyoung* ¹ , Fangsook, Gyungock*, Herim** ² , Inyoung* |
| Telecommuting | A work arrangement in which employees regularly work at home or at an alternate worksite during part or all of a work schedule. | Hyerim, Nami, Ooju, Pado |
| Reduced Work Hours--part-time work | A work arrangement in which employees normally work 15-35 hours per week on a regular basis. | Kyunghee, Lami, Minjung |
| Full Time Part-Time Work | A work schedule that is less than full-time but is at least half of the regularly scheduled full time workweek, entitling the worker to the same welfare benefits and insurances as full-time employees working 40 hours | Jiu |

Participant Profiles

My sixteen participants had different backgrounds in several areas. All of the

¹ Eungyoung, Gyungock, and Inyoung's companies, this arrangement was called flextime.

² Herim experienced two FWA options, staggered work hours and telecommuting.

participants had been married for an average of 8.9 years, ranging from 5 to 16 years. For their educational backgrounds, eight of them received a bachelor's degree, six a master's degree, and two had doctoral degrees. The participants' ages varied between 33 and 44, with the average being 37.3 years old. All of the women were mothers with one (8) or two children (7), except for Lami. The age range of their children was from 2 to 11, with the average being 5.3 years; and among the children, five ones were in the lower grades in elementary school, and the rest were attending daycare centers or were being taken care of at home by grandparents. The types of organizations my participants have worked in or currently work in were diverse, private (9), public (3), and foreign companies (4) in Korea. All of the participants were full-time employees; and except for Jiu, they all have worked without any career interruptions. Additionally, 14 out of the 16 women, except Jiu and Minjung, held mid-level positions. Table 3 provides a snapshot of the participants.

Table 3.

Profiles of the Participants

| Name | Age | Education | Type of Organization | Job Title | Functional Area | Current Organizational Tenure | Years Married | No. of Children (Age) |
|----------|-----|------------|----------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Ayoung | 42 | Ph.D. | Private | Senior Researcher | Scientific Instruments | 3 | 15 | 1 (11) |
| Bokyoung | 35 | Bachelor's | Private | Manager | Engineering | 11 | 7 | 1 (5) |
| Chaeock | 36 | Master's | Private | Manager | Cosmetics | 10 | 8 | 1 (7) |
| Dajung | 40 | Master's | Private | Senior Researcher | Cosmetics | 15 | 12 | 2 (9, 9) |
| Eunyoung | 42 | Ph.D. | Public | Senior Researcher | Nutrition | 10 | 14 | 1 (7) |
| Fangsook | 39 | Bachelor's | Private | Manager | Costume Design | 15 | 10 | 1 (9) |
| Gyungock | 35 | Bachelor's | Public | Assistant Manager | IT Services | 3 (11)* ³ | 5 | 2 (2, 4) |
| Herim | 37 | Master's | Private | Manager | Scientific Instruments | 6 | 5 | 2 (4) |

³ * : The number in parenthesis is the participant's total professional years of experience. Other participants, except for Gyungock, Jiu, and Pado, had only their current organizational tenure.

Table 3 Continued

| Name | Age | Education | Type of Organization | Job Title | Functional Area | Current Organizational Tenure | Years Married | No. of Children (Age) |
|-------------|------------|------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| Inyoung | 36 | Bachelor's | Private | Manager | Electronics | 11 | 7 | 2 (6, 3) |
| Jiu | 34 | Bachelor's | Private | "Happy Employee" | Customer Service | 1(6)* | 12 | 2 (9, 5) |
| Kyunghee | 36 | Master's | Public | Interpreter | Electronics | 7 | 8 | 2 (7, 4) |
| Lami | 44 | Bachelor's | Foreign | Group Desk Coordinator | Airlines | 18 | 16 | - |
| Minjung | 33 | Bachelor's | Private | Office Coordinator | Sales | 3 | 5 | 1 (2) |
| Nami | 33 | Master's | Foreign | Lead Financial Data Analyst | Financial | 4 | 4 | 1 (3) |
| Ooju | 34 | Bachelor | Foreign | Business Coordinator | Inspection and Expedition | 2 | 5 | 1 (3) |
| Pado | 40 | Master's | Foreign | Senior Project Manager | Pharmacy | 1(11)* | 12 | 2 (9, 4) |

Ayoung

“I don’t feel satisfied with either area [work and home]. I think it’s very difficult to find an ideal work-life balance. ... I always struggle with the two roles at work and home.”

Ayoung is 42 years old, married, and the mother of an 11-year old son. Currently, she has served as a senior researcher for three years at a scientific instrument company. She was one of the participants with an impressive educational background. She earned a Ph.D. degree in vascular physiology at a top university in Korea and worked as a postdoctoral researcher in an Ivy League university in the U.S. for three years. What made Ayoung unique among my participants was that she was the only woman whose husband fully and constantly supported his wife’s career. She started her doctoral program two months after she gave birth to her son. Around that time, her husband was just appointed as an assistant professor in a medical school in Seoul. Since her university was located in another city, they became a commuter couple. Until her son was 5 years old, when Ayoung received her Ph.D. degree, her mother-in law and her husband raised her son. After earning her degree, she went to the United States to build her career experience as a postdoctoral researcher. This period overlapped with her husband’s sabbatical, so he could devote his time to taking care of their child in the U.S. for one and half years. At the end of his sabbatical, Ayoung’s husband went back to Korea, but her mother and mother-in law came to the U.S. and each stayed for six months to help take care of her son.

Until getting her degree and her current position, Ayoung’s family has always been her biggest support. Even after starting to work at her current company in Korea, her husband never stopped supporting her and he was willing to assume the role of primary caregiver. Ayoung was particularly grateful for her husband’s unconditional support. During the interview, she shared the following sentiments.

My husband almost raised our son by himself during my postdoctoral period in the U.S. My role as a traditional mom was not big (2ID3).

Actually, my husband helped me a lot. He tried not to overwork and be late coming home. Looking back, he already had a stable job, but I didn't. So, I always felt busy trying to find a job while my husband spent more time caring for our son. My husband sometimes said sadly, 'I came back early even though I had an important journal article to submit today.' He often brought his work home and completed it on his laptop (2ID7).

Ayoung thought that her husband's full support was closely linked to the fact that he had more flexibility as a professor. Her husband's time and space flexibility enabled her to pursue and maintain a career.

I think the reason for his full support could be that he was a professor who could adjust his work schedule more freely than employees in companies. No matter how early I finished my job at work, I can't leave before six o'clock (2ID7).

While Ayoung was successful in her career, she confessed a lack in her role of mother. "My role as a mother is zero (2ID3)." Because of the feeling of guilt about her son, her satisfaction with work-life balance was not high.

My satisfaction with work-life balance is not high because I didn't devote my time to raising my son. I feel sorry about that now, and I will still feel sorry about it as time goes by. My biggest regret is that I couldn't keep watching and caring for my son and being by his side when he just started to crawl and walk. This is a minus, domestically (2ID10).

Recently, one of the efforts Ayoung made for her family was moving their residence closer to her company because the commuting time was two hours long. She wanted to spend more time with her son after work. Before then, Ayoung commuted the long distance by utilizing a staggered work hour arrangement for a year, meaning she started her work at 10 a.m. and finished at 7 p.m. This arrangement was offered only to high-performing researchers in her company. Thanks to this arrangement, Ayoung could spend more time chatting with her son in the morning, but coming late to the office meant leaving late from

work. Finally, Ayoung decided to move to the current residence in order to better balance work and family.

For Ayoung, work-life balance was always a very challenging issue, and a state that she could not fully achieve. Thus, she was skeptical about an ideal work-life balance.

I don't feel satisfied with either area [work and home]. I think it's very difficult to find an ideal work-life balance. Even if I spend 24 hours assuming the role of mother, it'll be hard to be a perfect mom. Likewise, no matter how hard I work at the company all day long, I cannot perfectly take care of my jobs at work. So, I need to separate work and home and establish the boundary. I always struggle with the two roles at work and home (2ID10).

Bokyoung

"I wanted to be honest, not lie to my kid. Not say, 'Just understand me!' but I wanted to say, 'Could you please understand your mom?' after honestly telling him about all my realities. I asked for understanding from my son regarding not getting together from time to time."

Bokyoung is 35 years old, married, and the mother of a 5-year old son. Since earning her bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering, she has served as an engineer at a large dockyard for 11 years. Bokyoung is one of the few female managers in the male-dominated company. In the male-centered organizational atmosphere, her strong professional identity and high job satisfaction were important components to sustain her current career. "My job is really interesting. As I am giving 100%, everything is good" (6ID9). Another important factor for her career was her husband. As he worked for the same company, he understood the atmosphere of the company and sincerely supported her. He was one of few husbands with an equal parenting partnership. Bokyoung said,

My husband plays several roles. If I focus more on child rearing, he takes care of the rest of housework except for cooking. He is the person I'm most grateful to (6ID9). When I work late at night, he takes care of our son. When he works overtime at night, I take care of my kid. If I serve a meal, he does the laundry. In this way, we become each other's assistant depending on our situation regarding work and childcare (6ID1).

Her son was another person to whom she was deeply grateful. One of the important disciplines of her child's education was "honesty." Although her son was young, Bokyoung had already explained to him, very candidly and clearly, about her work-related events such as business trips and work overtime, and then asked for his understanding.

I wanted to be honest, not lie to my kid. Not say, 'Just understand me!' but I wanted to say, 'Could you please understand your mom?' after honestly telling him about all my realities. I asked for understanding from my son regarding not getting together from time to time (6ID7). My son understands very well, because I've frankly talked about my work issues since he was young. He almost one hundred percent understands the reason he couldn't see me when I went overseas on business trips. I clearly explained to him, 'I am going to Denmark for business' (6ID10).

On one hand, Bokyoung recalled a particular time, a winter when her son was 3 years old, when she was challenged with her childcare. At that time, as usual, the couple had to leave home by 7 a.m. to make their regular working hours from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. However, it was too dark for their young son to wake up in the winter mornings. As Bokyoung's son suffered from not sleeping enough, she resorted to a newly established flexible working arrangement in her company for the first time.

When we went out at 7 a.m. it was still dark because it was winter. Since he [her son] didn't sleep well, he was weeping and wailing every day for a month in front of the entrance of my apartment. I felt heartbroken. I thought if he sleeps one more hour, then he would be fine. From that time, I started to use a staggered work hour arrangement that was just newly created in the company (6ID3).

According to Bokyoung, the new arrangement was created after one of her female colleagues with children directly emailed the CEO about the improvement of attendance time in the morning.

This new arrangement didn't exist but a working mom in my company sent an email directly to the CEO. 'It's very hard to go to the office in the early morning while taking care of children. It needs some improvement.' Right after that, my CEO facilitated the development of this arrangement (6ID4).

The users of this arrangement were limited to female employees with a child under 9 years old, and the user could start work at 9 a.m. and finish at 6 p.m., one hour shorter than the original schedule. Bokyung's company had longer work hours than the legal 8 hours, and the pay for the one hour of overtime was included in employees' monthly wages. "Normally, we worked 9 hours, from 8 to 6, and got paid for overtime work for the extra one hour [5-6 p.m.]. However, my company used the extra one hour for the purpose of the staggered working hours arrangement." (6ID5)

Bokyung's satisfaction with the staggered working hours was high in terms of childcare, but very low when it came to her work. She complained that her salary was reduced due to the one hour difference, but she was still responsible for the same amount of work. As a result, she voluntarily stopped using the new arrangement after 4 months based on her belief that the loss was bigger than the benefit. Bokyung did not believe raising this issue would make any difference, considering her organizational culture and the fact that she is one of the few female employees.

There is no way for women to suggest improvements for the company. My supervisor and the upper level bosses aren't interested in female employees because my company has very few female employees. If I go to see my boss to suggest improvements for the arrangement, he may answer, 'What the heck are you talking about?' So, I can't and won't say anything. Given that there are few women, few working moms, and I'm the only married woman with a child, who would understand my situation? (6ID5)

In order to balance her work and life, Bokyung accepted the conservative culture of her company, while relying on her husband's active involvement in childcare and housework. Additionally, she believed that to achieve a work-life balance, she does not have to be perfect in performing her roles at work and home. "Since I have to assume dual roles as a mom and an employee, given the limited time, I can't score one hundred points. But it's okay not to be

perfect” (6ID10). In a sense, her belief was a strategy to reduce her pressure on the accountability for the both roles at work and home. Since work-life balance was an ongoing issue for her, Bokyung wanted to share her thoughts with other married female employees.

Even though you are a working mom, you don’t have to carry a feeling of guilt of not putting in 100 percent of your energy and time. I don’t think that a stay-at-home mom can also pour her all energy into her kid. (6ID10).

Chaeock

“Other than my work and family, I don’t have any personal life at all, such as meeting my friends or hanging out with my colleagues. As I don’t have any time to do that because of my work and family, I am stressed a lot. I feel very sad about that. Regarding the problem, I want my husband to understand and help me a lot.”

Chaeock is 36 years old, married, and the mother of a 7 year-old son. Since earning her master’s degree in chemical engineering, she has served as a researcher at a research institute in a large cosmetics company for 10 years. In her professional life, her company’s support was a critical component to sustain her career continuity. Her company was famous as one of the few private companies with well-established women and family-friendly organizational culture and practices in Korea. Chaeock said that a vision of valuing employee’s quality of life in the company has contributed to making a more women/family-friendly organizational culture. Recently, the increase of female employees has played a role in creating the atmosphere as well. What was better for Chaeock was that most of the people in managerial positions in her department, including her, were married women with children and they were actively involved with childcare. This condition allowed her to use a family-friendly organizational practice such as flexible workplace arrangement more freely with less pressure.

My department head is a woman, and another manager is a woman, and me [manager]. As three of the four women in managerial positions are associated with

childcare, I could have more flexibility in using the staggered work hours, called Smart Working in my company (7ID3).

Chaeock's company provided two types of flexible workplace arrangements, called Smart Lunch and Smart Working. The former was to allow employees to use one hour more for lunch but to close one hour late. Sometimes, it was used to have a get-together during lunch instead of a company dinner in her department. For Smart Working, employees could adjust their starting and ending work schedules when needed. This arrangement was operated on an announcement system where people simply notified others of their changed work schedule through corporate emails or mobile chat rooms the day before. Chaeock occasionally used it when she had special events such as medical appointments or personal business. Her company's well-established FWA practice and women-friendly organizational culture not only allowed Chaeock to look after her children by herself without others' help but also increased her job satisfaction and commitment to her company.

Although Chaeock was satisfied with her current life in general, she had a complaint about the lack of her husband's support. Due to his traditional gender role values and his frequent overtime work, Chaeock often took care of her child and did housework alone, which made her feel doubly burdened from the multiple loads at work and home.

My husband tries to play with my son during the weekend. When he comes back home early, he tries to bathe my son and read some books. But, it's a problem that he rarely comes home early. As it's almost always me that arrives home earlier than him, I do most of the housework (7ID6). My husband has traditional thinking and takes for granted that I as a mom should take care of my kid. He doesn't think of his parenting role very much. I think many husband's value system is very problematic (7ID10).

When asked about the definition of work-life balance, she did not exactly define it. Instead, she expressed the thought that she wants to put top priority on her family rather than her work. Yet, in reality, as her job responsibility is also important, in order to achieve work-

life balance in an organizational institution, accommodations such as flexible workplace arrangements should constantly support employees. She felt that her organization's support for the quality of employees' lives was more than enough. Rather, she said that the most essential component for her work-life balance at the current moment is her husband's active support.

My company life depends on my ability and attitude. As long as I sincerely perform my job and don't make others uncomfortable, I believe my company gives much consideration for employees so that they can balance their work and family to some extent. However, for married women's work-life balance, it won't be workable without their husbands' support. So, I think my husband's support is the most important now (7ID7).

Furthermore, Chaeock had another wish unrelated to family- or work-related events, which was having her own time for herself. She has not had any vacations for herself for a long time because of childcare, which exhausted her. Chaeock wanted to relax by doing other activities such as meeting friends. In order to have the time, she really wanted her husband's support.

Other than my work and family, I don't have any personal life at all, such as meeting my friends or hanging out with my colleagues. As I don't have any time to do this because of my work and family, I am stressed a lot. I feel very sad about this. Regarding the problem, I want my husband to understand and help me a lot (7ID8).

Dajung

"To balance my work and life, the role of my husband at home is very critical, because I believe he is the right man for making it work. However, as he is rarely involved with domestic work, I cannot help but take my mom's help to meet the current balance of my work and family life. So, for me, my husband's support is more critical than the support of flexible workplace arrangement."

Dajung is 40 years old, married, and the mother of 9-year-old twin girls. Since receiving her master's degree in biochemistry, she has worked at a research institute in a large cosmetics company for 15 years, currently serving as a senior researcher. Dajung is

employed by the same company as Chaeock. Not unlike Chaeock, Dajung's satisfaction with her company's supportive and women-friendly environment was also very high. The fact that these two women have worked for this company for more than ten years as their first jobs would indicate their high job satisfaction and strong commitment to their company.

Looking back at her past 15 years at the company, Dajung particularly appreciated the gradual changes in organizational culture such as fewer company dinners and a weakened business drinking culture. She believes the growing number of female employees have contributed greatly to creating the new organizational culture. Furthermore, her company's institutional support systems (e.g. Smart Lunch, a 119 campaign, etc.) helped boost and settle the new culture. This organizational atmosphere, untypical for Korean corporate culture, made Dajung less stressed at work.

I think that the increase of female employees in my company has created a new organizational atmosphere of get-togethers, gradually changing the company dinner into lunch. As there are many female employees with children, they often suggested a company lunch instead of dinner. Also, fortunately, my company provides a flexible Smart Lunch. In this case, we can use a two-hour lunch but leave late one hour for the day. For a company dinner, my company has carried on a 119 campaign to establish a healthy get-together. This means, with one item, the first round of a company dinner, and the dinner is finished by 9 p.m. Consequently, the business drinking culture was also reduced much more than before. Unlike other companies, and even the sales department in our head office, my research institute's atmosphere is like this. So, people don't have much stress from the company dinner (8ID9).

In addition to the Smart Lunch, Dajung often used the flexible workplace arrangement of Smart Working, described in Chaeock's case, when she had occasional events, including medical appointments, family events, or personal business. Dajung remembered this arrangement was very useful when her twin girls entered elementary school last year. Thanks to the use of flexible time, she was able to support her daughters until they fully settled into the new environment.

When my daughters entered the first grade of elementary school, I utilized regular – based Smart Working for a long period of time. I thought that being an elementary school student would be a big change and challenge for my little ones. So, I took them to their school and watched them walk into the entrance of the school until they felt comfortable going to school. During that time, I started work one hour late in the morning (8ID5).

In her family domain, her mother was the strongest support for Dajung’s career continuity. Her mother has been actively involved with taking care of Dajung’s daughters.

My mom has constantly supported me, from birth to the present. Without my mom’s support, I would never have been able to continue to work. These days, my mom has stayed at my home during the weekdays to look after my kids, and goes back to her home during the weekend” (8ID2).

Whereas Dajung was very grateful for her mother’s great support and sacrifice, she always felt the lack of her husband’s support. Dajung’s husband was “a typical Korean guy,” and was rarely engaged in domestic work such as housework and childcare. “He doesn’t think that he has to do domestic jobs, such as raising children or housework” (8ID14). Although he works for the same company as Dajung, his understanding and consideration for Dajung was extremely lacking. For this reason, Dajung pointed out her husband’s support as the most critical factor for her work-life balance.

To balance my work and life, the role of my husband at home is very critical because I believe he is the right man for making it work. However, as he is rarely involved with domestic work, I cannot help but take my mom’s help to meet the current balance of my work and family life. So, for me, my husband’s support is more critical than the support of a flexible workplace arrangement (8ID14).

Eunyoung

“The driving force for my job is my daughter. When I didn’t have a kid, the big motivation for my work was my achievement. But the major reason I am working now is to be a role model for my kid. I want my daughter to have and develop her dream naturally by watching my vocational life and indirectly experiencing the job world. ... I want her to acknowledge me as a professional with a job in this society, not just as a mother.”

Eunyoung is 42 years old, married, and the mother of a 7 year-old daughter. After earning her doctoral degree in oriental and western medicine, Eunyoung has worked as a researcher at a national research institute related to food for 10 years. She was recently promoted to senior researcher. Until she became a professional woman, her mother's active support was a powerful resource. Since her daughter's birth, her mother has taken care of her daughter as the primary caregiver.

Since I returned to work after maternity leave, my mom raised my daughter at her home for 5 years. My kid stayed with my parents during the weekdays and got together at my home during weekends for a long time. As she grew up, she was missing me, her mother. My parents felt sorry for her while watching her, and they finally decided to move their residence nearer my apartment. From that time, we were reunited with my daughter, and my parents have looked after my daughter and supported me until now, closer to us (12ID4).

Eunyoung mostly relied on her mother during the weekdays for child-rearing and dinner preparation. Because of her high dependence on her parents, she always cared about her parent's ideas and rules. Thanks to her parents' full care, she could completely focus on her work with a strong professional identity.

On one hand, Eunyoung was very satisfied with her organization's supportive working environment and good welfare system. She believed that the several welfare benefits were the characteristics of Korean public organization, and was proud of working at a public organization. "Because of a variety of organizational supportive system, the public organizations are a good place for women to work" (12ID9). Moreover, Eunyoung stated that the recent increase of young female researchers has contributed to changing the male-centered organization into a women-friendly organizational culture. "My organization doesn't have sex discrimination and standardize women's jobs. I think my company has fully

provided many welfare benefits for female scientists. Since my organizational supports are already enough, I don't need further support as long as they're observed well" (12ID12).

One of the support systems she was utilizing was staggered work hours. She was the first to use this arrangement in her company. When Eunyoung brought her daughter home two years ago, she employed this arrangement to spend more time with her daughter in the evening.

I started to use the staggered work hours, working from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., because of my daughter. At that time, we [my husband, our daughter, and me] were just reunited and lived together. As I didn't have time to send my daughter to kindergarten in the morning, instead, I tried to go to work early and spend more time with my daughter in the evening after work (12ID7).

Eunyoung was very content with the arrangement in that her physical and psychological stress was much reduced, positively affecting her work and life in general. However, although no one forced her to stay late in the office, Eunyoung usually stayed one to two hours longer, not leaving on time at 5 p.m. because of the pressure for a better performance as a senior researcher. Consequently, she did not come home too late, but did not have as much time in the evening to spend with her daughter as she had originally intended.

One of Eunyoung's wishes was to be a mother like a friend. In reality, however, she felt her life was much more focused on her work. Eunyoung was not good at compartmentalizing work and family. The first thing she did when she got home after work was to turn on her laptop sitting on the chair. Eunyoung attributed this behavior to her personal characteristics, which was influenced by her habits and attitudes during her doctoral period.

I can't stop working at home because of my personal characteristics. If I don't work, I feel so uncomfortable for some reason. I think this pattern has become habitual since

my doctoral period. When I was a doctoral student, going somewhere to rest was stressful... Rather than pressure from my current job, my attitude results from my personal characteristics influenced by that period. I'm grilling myself (12ID1).

Because of this, she carries a feeling of guilt at all times because she feels she has not spent enough time with her daughter. Connecting her context, she thought that work-life balance is to perform faithfully one's roles in work and life domains through appropriate time distribution. She particularly emphasized the importance of the compartmentalizing of the two spheres for work-life balance, because she felt it was difficult to do it.

Although job satisfaction was higher than the family area, Eunyoung tried to illustrate the meaning of her job for her daughter. Specifically, Eunyoung wanted to be a good role model for her daughter so that she could have and develop her dream while watching her mother's professional life. Eunyoung's daughter was the biggest motivation for her to work hard and maintain her professional identity.

The driving force for my job is my daughter. When I didn't have a kid, the big motivation for my work was my achievement. But the major reason I am working now is to be a role model for my kid. I want my daughter to have and develop her dream naturally by watching my vocational life and indirectly experiencing the job world. ... I want her to acknowledge me as a professional with a job in this society, not just as a mother (12ID7).

Fangsook

"The best thing I am doing for my work-life balance is totally understanding and accepting my husband's life, attitudes, and thoughts as they are. I try not to change his attitudes and thoughts as I want."

Fangsook is 39 years old, married, and the mother of a 9-year-old boy. Since graduating from a university with a major of textile and clothing, she has worked for a uniform designer at an amusement park for 15 years, this year being the 4th year as manager in the design department. Fangsook was one of the few participants with high career aspirations. The strongest support that enabled Fangsook to continuously embrace her career

ambition was her mother. Her mother wanted Fangsook to live as a professional career woman because she had regretted quitting her job due to child rearing.

My mom was a teacher at a public school. At that time, my father's earnings were good. So, my mom quit her job to raise us. As she regretted quitting her job very much because of childcare, her daughter didn't want to abandon her job like her. So, my mom has fully supported me so I would not follow in her steps (13ID9).

Her mother, as the primary caregiver, has taken care of Fangsook's son from his birth to the present. She raised her grandson for 4 years at her home. Then, since Fangsook's son became a kindergartener, her mother has looked after him at Fangsook's home during the weekdays and goes back to her home during the weekends. During the interview, Fangsook often said she was almost always stress-free from childcare because of her mom's full care, instead could concentrate more on her job. "Actually, as I've been completely supported by my mom regarding the issue of childcare, I've focused on my work without any parenting stress (13ID1). Thanks to my mom, I could work very hard for 15 years, even now, and have gotten promoted fast" (13ID9).

At work, Fangsook was very satisfied with her company's welfare system and family-friendly organizational environment. She believed that her organization's culture has positively changed into women- or family-friendly, compared to past years, which decreased the turnover rate for married female employees.

My company has provided several family-friendly policies such as Family Day every Wednesday [referring to a family-friendly campaign to encourage employees to finish their work on time without overtime] and a staggered work hours arrangement, and maternity and parent leaves" (13ID4). Because of the better working environment, married female employees' turnover rate was reduced (13ID18).

Among the several family-friendly policies, Fangsook recalled when she used a staggered work hour arrangement. Half of the employees in her department utilized the arrangement for different purposes regardless of gender. Fangsook started to use this arrangement to spend

more time with her son in the evening when he entered elementary school last year, thereby starting work one hour earlier working from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Yet, the changed life pattern did not fit well with Fangsook and her son's original schedules. Before then, Fangsook mostly utilized her morning time to help with her son's homework. In order to start work earlier when using the arrangement she had to abandon the time spent with her son in the morning. Moreover, as only one option for the schedule of staggered work hours, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. was given to employees, flexibility for scheduling was very limited. After a few months, she returned to her original life pattern and withdrew from the staggered work hours. "For me, my original life pattern was more effective" (13ID6).

On one hand, although Fangsook and her husband work at the same company, their lives at work were very different. Her husband was much busier than Fangsook because her husband worked in a different departmental environment related to field work. An aspect of their different organizational atmospheres was found in using family-friendly practices such as a flexible workplace arrangement and Family Day. The company did not allow employees in Fangsook's husband's department to use FWA and Family Day due to departmental job characteristics. Fangsook sincerely understood his busy organizational life and let him only concentrate on his company work, and did not ask him to help with any domestic work. Additionally, she accepted her husband's characteristics with a strong traditional gender role identity without any complaints.

My husband rarely participates in domestic work such as childcare, housework, cleaning, and so forth. I think almost all Korean men don't care about that, not only my husband. If I don't accept it, conflicts would frequently occur. I don't want to fight with him because of that. Also, my husband is very enthusiastic about his job, and keeps studying for his work. I'd like to applaud his passion. As long as I can manage my family-related work alone, I let him go" (13ID12).

Fangsook' satisfaction with her work-life balance was very high because she believed her work and family were going well without any problem. She thought the main cause for her high satisfaction was attributed to her positive personality and sincere consideration for her husband. "The best thing I am doing for my work-life balance is totally understanding and accepting my husband's life, attitude, and thoughts as they are. I try not to change his attitudes and thoughts as I want" (13ID13). This thought was not only her own work-life balance strategy but also the way to make her current life happy.

Gyungock

"Recently, my husband suddenly asked me, 'What is your goal these days?' I said I don't have a special goal for my life now. Just, my goal is about how to end today, day by day, from going to the office to putting our kids to bed."

Gyungock is 35 years old, married, and the mother of two young daughters, a 4-year-old and a 2-year-old. After her graduation from a university with a major in business, she worked for eight years at a large company that provides a global IT service. During the first year of her marriage, she worked overtime almost every day, usually past midnight, because of a heavy workload and preparing for her promotion. Gyungock was promoted to manager, but not much later, she became pregnant and gave birth to her first daughter during her first year. The birth of her child caused her to face unexpected problems in her work and life. The most critical issue for Gyungock was quitting time at the office. Her job was almost always so hectic that she could not imagine leaving the office on time and was on call even during the weekend. She was very concerned about her five-month old baby all the time during work, and the role of mother became her big pressure. Finally, three months after returning to the company from her maternity leave, Gyungock decided to quit the company and sought another job with better time flexibility.

Her new company was a public organization in charge of the public IT service under the Ministry of Health and Welfare. This company was awarded the prize for family-friendly organization last year from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family and provided employees with flexible workplace arrangements. Compared to the previous company, her salary and position were lower, but Gyungock had more time to get together with her family. She reflected on her decision for the turnover:

Personally, I felt very sorry that I quit working for this company, a dream company for many people. I've seen many colleagues who have still worked at this company after their deliveries although they had similar difficulties with childcare. However, 'why me? Why I should leave this company?' I also had this kind of thought before. But when I had a mind of my own, I thought if I work continuously here in this pattern I would probably abandon my home and child... and require sacrifices from others, mother-in law, my mom, or others. I cannot help asking others, not me. If I only thought of money, my personal achievement, and job satisfaction, it would be right to stay at the previous company though... I don't regret changing to my current company, now. I don't have a big complaint with my current life (14D10).

Within a few months of starting her new job, Gyuongock found that she was pregnant again with her second daughter. Her life after being the mother of two young children was much busier across the work and home domains. Fortunately, after returning from her second maternity leave, she got an opportunity to utilize staggered work hours that was recently created in the company. The regular working time at her company was 9 to 6, but she chose the working schedule from 8 to 5 to concentrate on evening time to take care of her children. Choosing the option, she had to leave for work before her children were awake. Before she left, her mother-in law came to her home every morning to send her children to the daycare center. Her mother-in law assumed the role of sending and picking up her granddaughters while Gyungock was working.

The staggered work hour arrangement was somewhat helpful for childcare, but it was still demanding to manage Gyungock's work and life. In the workplace, she concentrated

only on her work without any down time, no chatting with others, or Internet surfing, because she had to complete her jobs in the limited time and leave earlier than her colleagues.

Although there was no one who pushed her to work overtime at night, nobody left the office on time. In order to meet the organizational atmosphere to some extent, she voluntarily worked at least one hour overtime everyday, thereby working 8 to 6. As soon as she arrived at home, her mother-in law went back to her home, and Gyungock's evening jobs, such as preparing dinner, bathing her children, and putting them to bed, at home began. Gyungock's husband tried to come home early to support her, but she felt that he was just a helper because her role as primary caregiver pressed down on her all the time. From getting up to going to bed, she planned every minute of the 24 hours and squeezed her energy to perform properly in work and family. Gyungock stated that her stress level is always over 100 out of 100 percent due to her uneasy feelings of missing something at work or at home. At one point, closing a day without any problems became her goal in life. Gyungock said,

Recently, my husband suddenly asked me, 'What is your goal these days?' I said I don't have a special goal or my life now. Just, my goal is about how to end today, day by day, from going to the office to putting our kids to bed (14ID4).

Despite this uncomfortable condition, she thought her circumstances for work-life balance were better than when working at the previous company. Also, Gyungock tried to have a positive belief that "this challenging time for childcare, too, shall pass away when my children are grown up." (14ID11) Moreover, although her current life leaned more to her children, Gyungock believed that she would get an opportunity to focus more time on working at the company after her children were older.

Herim

“The thought of balancing work and family itself isn’t reasonable... If I have to do housework again after leaving the office this will negatively influence my work tomorrow. ... There never exists a balance. As my life leans to one side, it’s more convenient.”

Herim is 37 years old, married, and the mother of a 4-year-old son. She earned a master’s degree in computer science and currently is serving as a senior researcher in a scientific instrument company. Her uniqueness was that Herim was the sole breadwinner among the participants because of her husband’s unemployment a year ago. Herim was also the only participant who has lived with her in-laws. In her career life, her mother-in law’s support was an indispensable component. Since her son’s birth, her mother-in law has played the critical role of primary caregiver and homemaker. After delivering her son, her family, including her husband, her son, and she lived in her parents-in-law’s home for six months while being fully supported by her mother-in law.

Three months later, when her maternity leave was almost over, her company offered Herim a telecommuting work arrangement for the first time, and she accepted it instead of using one-year parental leave. She commented,

There was no telecommuting practice in this company but my company got consideration for me. Nobody used it at that time. If I used parental leave for one year, task continuity and work efficiency would be decreased. So, I think my company made a decision to offer the option for the first time with their belief that ‘if she can do her work at home we’ll allow it.’ Just in time, I got some jobs such as paperwork that I could take care of by myself online (3ID2).

As a result of both parties’ well-matched interests, Herim became the first user of the telecommuting practice in the company. While staying at her parents-in-law’s home, she performed a minimum of childcare and focused more on her telecommuting work. It was possible thanks to her mother-in-law’s full support for housework and childcare. When she had to return to work after the end of her telecommuting, she was concerned about her baby’s

care. This time again, her parents-in-law decided to take care of her son, and they raised her son for three years at their home. This year, her parents-in-law moved to the city where the couple was living and have lived together to support Herim's family.

Her experiences at home were not like a typical Korean woman. Herim rarely spent her energy on housework because of her mother-in-law's support. As she was the real breadwinner of the family, traditional woman's roles at home were not largely given to her. This was a very rare case in the Korean context where a daughter-in-law's filial piety or services towards her parents-in-law, influenced by Confucianism, has been traditionally emphasized. Combining her characteristics, such as not having to care for others and her economic position in the family, her life was more like a traditional Korean man's daily life. For Herim, home was a place to take a rest. The emancipation from the traditional gender role made her happy at home in a sense. "I don't get stressed from home" (3ID11). "My mother-in-law may endure many things while we live together" (3ID3). Regarding her family roles, she added,

I don't have any special work at home. When I go home from the company I just play with my son for a while and sometimes get him to sleep if he didn't sleep during the day. If I was late, my husband did everything (3ID1).

Herim was satisfied with her current life in general. "I can work as much I want and can see my baby every day as well. I can spend my time with family during the weekend and don't work at all at home" (3ID8). Interestingly, she said that her high life satisfaction was attributed to not trying to balance work and home. "There never exists a balance. As my life leans to one side it's more convenient. I'm not good at doing housework and not interested it... from the moment when I start to balance them, I will get in trouble" (3ID9).

As seen in her quote, Herim had a very realistic view of work-life balance and considered it an ideal concept. She believed this cannot be realized in reality because of family-to-work interference. Herim strongly expressed her thoughts about work-life balance:

I think work-life balance won't be workable. It'll be very challenging to meet the balance. Within 24 hours a day, let's say, if I work for 8 hours and sleep for 8 hours, 8 hours will be left. I already consumed my energies for the 8 hours in the workplace. But it'll be very difficult to work again for the other 8 hours at home, regardless if a person is male or female. So, I think the roles of the 8 hours at home should be replaced with another person, who is paid. The thought of balancing work and family itself isn't reasonable... If I have to do housework again after leaving the office this will negatively influence my work tomorrow. (3ID7)

Ironically, Herim maintained her high satisfaction with work-life balance through the opposite thoughts and attitudes of balance, imbalance. It was her unique strategy for her work-life balance.

Inyoung

"Even though I am working, I'm giving more weight to my children. For me, my company is just the way to earn money. While working, I often think of my children and am concerned about them. Some of my colleagues with high career aspirations usually work late and come to work even during the weekend. However, I just concentrate on my work during the regular work hours and try not to do overtime so I can see my children early. I don't have high career aspirations."

Inyoung is 36 years old, married, and the mother of a 6-year-old daughter and a 3-year-old son. Since graduating from a university with a major in computer engineering, Inyoung has worked at a top-tier electronic company in Korea, currently serving as a manager. Inyoung's company was famous for corporate images of high salary, heavy workloads, and frequent night overtime. In recent years, however, the CEO in the company has actively created several family/women-friendly practices and welfare policies in order to reform the organizational culture and keep pace with other leading global companies.

A variety of leaves have recently been created, such as leave for self-development and overseer training. The duration of parent leave expanded from 1 year to 2 years

this year. Also, since last year, my company has carried out flextime so that people can choose their work schedule based on 40 hours a week with a minimum of a 4-hour work day (10ID6).

Inyoung also utilized the flextime arrangement for personal business, family trips, or children's medical appointments. Although her husband was working at the same company, he did not use flextime very much. This is because his department was usually busier than her department, and he often worked overtime. Moreover, as Inyoung had a clear view of her husband as the breadwinner and her as the primary caregiver, she tried to understand his business and assume the parenting role alone. Consequently, her husband's frequent overtime work made Inyoung rely more on the flextime arrangement so that she could secure time for her parenting role.

My husband frequently worked late and came back after midnight. It was very hard to take care of my kids alone. Because he always comes home late, I couldn't help but get off work early. I think my husband [as the breadwinner] should survive more at this company than me (10ID4).

Inyoung did not yet feel a big change in the organizational atmosphere caused by the new arrangement, but agreed that this arrangement made her somewhat relaxed in scheduling her work hours, especially when unexpected childcare problems occurred.

Despite Inyoung's good working environment and high salary, her career aspirations and job satisfaction were not high. For Inyoung, her job was just a means to make money to raise her children, and she wanted to devote more of her time to take care of her kids at home. She always carried a feeling of guilt about not spending more time with her children during the weekdays. At work, Inyoung tried to focus on her jobs during working hours and leave the office on time to take care of her children.

Even though I am working, I'm giving more weight to my children. For me, my company is just the way to earn money. While working, I often think of my children and am concerned about them. Some of my colleagues with high career aspirations

usually work late and come to work even during the weekend. However, I just concentrate on my work during the regular work hours and try not to work overtime in order to see my children early (10ID1). I don't have high career aspirations. Sometimes, I think that if I quit my job I will just let my husband earn money alone (10ID9).

Compared to her low job satisfaction, her satisfaction with work-life balance in general was high. The leading reason for her high satisfaction was related to her children's good workplace childcare facilities. Inyoung was sending her two children to the daycare center in her company. The daycare center had very professional teachers, good educational programs, and safe facilities. The center stayed open longer than other daycare centers, until 8 p.m., and this center also provided dinner for children who stayed late. Her trust in the daycare center increased the level of her work-life balance.

I'm really satisfied with the current daycare center. My kids play very well there and like to go. The quality of meals is good there, and the educational programs are nice. The educational function for this center makes up for what I cannot do for my kids. In several ways, I trust it here and send my kids (10ID7).

Jiu

"Regardless of promotion and salary, it's more important that the job opportunity was given to me. There never existed anything like this institution ["Happy Employee"], but it was newly created. There aren't many jobs that a housewife can do, really. It's very hard to work again but this is a special case. Because of that, it's very much meaningful to earn this job opportunity again."

Jiu is 34 years old, married, and the mother of two sons, a 9-year-old and a 5-year-old. She majored in international trade at a university and worked in the HR department in heavy industries in a local city for 6 years. Jiu met her husband in the company and they married. After her first child's birth, she was very stressed from childcare and her work because she did not have anyone who could support her in the city. Her parents and parents-in-law lived in different cities, and her husband was a very busy engineer who often worked late into the night. What was worse, at that time, her move to another department made her

life more exhausting because her new job was not interesting and she had little desire to actively learn the job due to childcare. Jiu recalled the past,

I didn't have anyone who could help with my childcare. It was hard to find a good daycare or a babysitter in this city. There were not many infrastructures for childcare. At work, I didn't have the will to learn something actively in the new department because I needed to leave the office on time. If I was actively involved with work, I would not leave early. So, I just passively came and went. Otherwise, my life would not be maintained. At that time, my child was too young, and I had absolutely no time (4ID3).

Jiu always felt guilty that her young son was sent to the daycare for twelve hours a day and that this situation had been repeated for two years. The reduction of her interest in her new job was also a big stressor. Jiu could not overcome the difficult realities, and at last, resigned from the company. After that, she gave birth to her second child, and has concentrated only on child-rearing at home for three years.

In the meanwhile, they moved their residence to Seoul, following her husband's company. After going to Seoul, Jiu always felt unstable in her mind because of child-rearing stress and anxiety about the future. One day, she found that she could not do any bank-related contracts in her name.

I didn't regret quitting the company but didn't have any expectation that I could restart my career. Because the pressure for caring for my children was always pushing me, I didn't think of finding the way to solve the problem. The anxiety was always pressing down on me. At that time, my children were very young, so I couldn't even go to the bank because I couldn't drive a car. All my money, receiving or payments, was through my husband's bank account. One day, I found out that I didn't have anything in my name. There had been no financial transaction statements with my name for several years. I couldn't get any credit cards because I didn't have a job. From that moment, I thought, 'This is a reality. I need to start any work.'

Jiu realized that her life satisfaction could not be complete by only rearing her children. With this thought in her mind, she started to seek a part-time job, first near her home and worked as a part-timer at two different companies for five months. Although her position and wages

were very much lower than before when she was a regular employee, Jiu was just happy to find a place where she could go regularly besides her home.

While working there, she saw information about the recruitment of full time part-time employees, called “Happy Employee,” in a large distribution corporation. This was a new form of employment in some large companies that was first carried out as a national policy to create decent jobs targeted to career-interrupted women. Fortunately, Jiu became one of the six happy employees in the company. As the original purpose of happy employees was to support the work-life balance of married women with children, she worked 6 hours a day, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. At the same time, she could get the same welfare benefits and four major insurances that were given to full-time employees who worked 40 hours per week. Due to the newness of this institution, Jiu sometimes complained about unclear and fuzzy operation policies for happy employees, such as employee evaluation, promotion, and compensation.

Despite the complaints and her tough life in the workplace, this institution was surely helpful for Jiu who took care of her children alone without any backup. It was particularly useful to have more time for picking up her children after work. Jiu was grateful to this institution. She stated,

Work-life balance is possible to some extent in my current condition, although it's difficult. It's not light or easy, but it's possible to manage both the roles of mother and employee to some extent. Also, I'm not depressed like in the past when I was a stay-at-home mom. Regardless of promotions and salary, it's more important that the job opportunity was given to me. There never existed an institution like this before, it was newly created. There aren't many jobs that a housewife can do, really. It's very hard to work again, but this is a special case. Because of that, it's very meaningful to have this job opportunity (4ID14).

In her current life, the most important thing was her appreciation that the job opportunity was given to her, a career-interrupted woman. The new opportunity gave her energy in life and

made her feel alive. Jiu always tried to do her best in performing the roles at work and home so as not to lose this chance. She was afraid that the balance would be broken either way, and it might set her back to her previous life as a stay-at-home mom. Thus, the compatibility with work and family was an ongoing critical issue not to lose her new life.

Kyunghee

“I think I have old-fashioned ideas a little bit in that it’s right for a woman to be a primary caregiver. I don’t want to have this thinking but naturally have it. No matter that my husband can’t help me, I don’t complain, and just accept it given the situational reality”

Kyunghee is 36 years old, married, and the mother of two children, a 7-year-old boy and a 4-year-old girl. After graduating from a graduate school of interpretation and translation, she has served as an interpreter for 7 years in a public enterprise related to electricity. Due to the needs of interpreters because of her company’s expansion of overseas business, Kyunghee was recruited for the first time in the company. Although she was a full-time employee, she had a position in special services without a promotion and position change. Kyunghee did not even have an immediate supervisor, because she was in charge of an independent job related to only interpreting and translating. Her special position deeply influenced her life at work, furthermore affecting her family life.

After becoming a mother, Kyunghee was more grateful to have the full-time position as an interpreter in the public organization. This is because generally, the majority of public enterprises in Korea tend to provide several welfare policies and a more relaxed working environment than private companies. She said,

There aren’t many interpreters with the position of full-time employee. Most of them are contract employees. Especially, it’s rare to hire an interpreter as a full-time employee in a state-owned company. I didn’t think of working here such a long time at first, but after giving birth to my children, I found that it’s more advantageous for me to work at a public organization to balance work and family in Korea. So, I’ve worked here so far (5ID11).

Among public enterprises, her company was one of the top public organizations with a variety of welfare benefits for employees, and was well known for a women/family-friendly organization.

However, contrary to the social image of the company, Kyunghee felt that her company was still lacking consideration for the female employees in the male-dominated organization. Kyunghee believed that the company's women/family-friendly images were externally created in the process of her company's formal efforts to observe national women's policies rather than from its internal consideration for women. "I think as a large public enterprise, my company should've set a good example to carry out the national policies and advertise them to other companies" (5ID3) "Still, my colleagues' minds lacked consideration. Because of the operation of national policy and the trend, my company should've reflected these policies, but I don't think people's minds were changed" (5ID12). At least, in her experiences, Kyunghee did not feel a large substantial change of organizational culture toward being more women-friendly.

Despite her experience with the organizational culture, Kyunghee admitted that she was one of the welfare recipients in the company in that she has utilized a flexible workplace arrangement of reduced work hours.

As my company is a public organization, recently, a lot of work-family balance practices have been created. Since the decision of my company's transfer to a local city, my company has increased more welfare programs to retain employees (5ID2). Fortunately, Kyunghee remained in the company in Seoul due to her unique position. However, her children could not attend the corporate daycare center any longer by cause of the transfer of the head office with all of the facilities to a local city. Her children's new daycare center closed earlier than the previous one, and she had to pick them up earlier.

Kyunghee discussed this concern with her department head and was given an opportunity to utilize the reduced work hours from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., which was a 25% reduction in work hours. Although there were a few employees who used staggered office hours, she was the only user of the reduced work hours in her department. Kyunghee said, “everything was possible because of my special position” (5ID6). She added,

I don’t deal with any administrative work at all, only interpreting and translating jobs. That’s why I could use the flexible workplace arrangement. Another reason is that maybe, I am a long-term employed and experienced worker. Otherwise, it may not work. While working for 7 years, my skills were highly developed so that I could take care of my job effectively and quickly. Additionally, my job is not always fixed, so, it’s possible to use the reduced work hours (5ID1).

After changing to reduced work hours, there was no big change in her everyday life. Even before then, she had to leave the office on time at 6 p.m. to pick up her children. Kyunghee appealed her identity as a mother to her colleagues, and tried to compartmentalize the boundaries between work and family. The leading reason was that she was the primary caregiver who was taking care of her children alone without any help. As her husband almost always worked late and had weekend commitments, Kyunghee could hardly depend on his parental and spousal roles. Instead, she tried to faithfully fulfill her parenting role to make up for her husband’s absence with a sincere understanding of her husband’s organizational culture. “He is a very domestic person, but his working environment causes him to not be domestic. But when he has available time, he tries to be actively involved with family work” (5ID8).

Kyunghee defined work-life balance as the possibility that she can properly manage both work and family. In her concept, her satisfaction with work-life balance was largely

high. This was because she was willing to accept her position as the primary caregiver and her husband's frequent absences from home, and perform her roles pleasantly.

I think I have old-fashioned ideas a little bit in that it's right for a woman to be a primary caregiver. I don't want to have this thinking but cannot help but think like that. No matter that my husband can't help me, I don't complain and just accept it given the situational reality (5ID10).

Lami

"My style is very individualistic. I pursue compatibility with my private time and work in my life. ... I feel that my disposition has made me stay in this company for a long time. If I had a strong desire for honor or career advancement, I would not stay here any longer. But here is a really good place to work if I don't have such ambitions."

Lami is 44 years old, married, and she was the only woman with no child among the participants. She currently served as a group desk coordinator at a foreign airline. As she did not have a child, her life was mainly focused on her work, herself, and her husband. Lami was one of the participants who sincerely enjoyed her job and had high commitment to the company. Before working at this company, she had worked at two Korean companies but was fed up with conservative and authoritative Korean organizational culture. Decisively, after witnessing her company's irrationality, Lami quit and sought another job. She described that her current company has a family-like atmosphere, is cooperative, and not that competitive, and has a horizontal relationship. Since her characteristics were well-matched with her jobs and the organizational culture made her stay in this company for 18 years.

Although her job satisfaction was high, she had concerns about not having children despite 16 years of marriage. Lami described herself as a person who got more stressed than others in everyday life. In order to reduce her daily stress and prepare for having a child, she volunteered to use a 30% reduced work hour arrangement that her company introduced. This arrangement was not originally established in the company but was offered as a cost-

reducing strategy by the company three years ago. As it was guaranteed that she could return to her original full time work, Lami decided to utilize it for two years. During the time, she worked four days per week, Monday through Thursday, with a daily schedule of 10 to 6 based on an HR contract. For the rest of her time, she put her effort into having a child, going to the medical center for artificial fertilization, resting at home, or spending time with her family.

Lami was happy about a more relaxed life but had one difficulty with using the arrangement. She found that her colleague assumed the responsibility of her reduced 30% jobs without any backup force or compensation. She strongly expressed her complaints about it:

I was very sorry about my colleagues. My company was very selfish. When the company first offered this policy, it should've had a policy to back up the rest of the time. There was no consideration of it at all. Koreans have a strong sense of responsibility. They never allow a hole in their work. The headquarters very well knew about Koreans' dispositions. It was good for the company because they saved money anyway (9ID6).

Because she felt sorry for her colleagues, Lami changed her schedule to a 20% reduced working hour schedule in the middle. Despite her efforts, her desire to have a child was not realized, and she returned to her full-time work 1.5 years later, not completely filling the 2 year-term of the contract of the working arrangement.

On one hand, while the other participants devoted most of their time to childcare, Lami spent her time caring for her husband and doing all the housework. Her husband was a very traditional Korean man and did not do any housework. When newly married, Lami argued with him due to his patriarchal characteristics, but gradually accepted him as he was over the course of many years of marriage. Her acceptance of her conservative husband was her own strategy to be less stressed at home. Lami also demonstrated that her acceptance

toward her husband's attitude may be an internalized educational result influenced by traditional gender roles.

Actually, when dating him before marriage, I already knew about his conservative characteristics, and anyway, I chose him as my life partner. I didn't want to consume my energy by fighting with him. So, I don't quarrel a lot with him. On one hand, I think I have been trained by the traditional social norms to some extent. I've always seen women assume the roles of housework since I was young. Surely, there exists a role of education here. I think this is not fair but I was also educated by this social norm, so, I am accepting it (9ID14).

Lami's satisfaction with quality of her entire life was high. She connected a leading component to make her life happy with her individualistic disposition, unlike typical Koreans who place value on collectivism at work. While working in this company, she had received several good offers with a promotion and a better salary from other companies. Whenever she got the calls, she refused them and remained at her current company. This was because the most important thing in her life was not money and a higher position but having a more relaxed time in which her family can get together. She stated,

My style is very individualistic. I should pursue compatibility with my private time and work in my life. In Korean companies, people drop their personal lives and overwork every night. It doesn't fit well with my life value. Yet, people in my company leave exactly on time and others don't mind. I really like the accurate nine to six system of my company. I feel that my disposition has made me stay in this company for a long time. If I had a strong desire for honor or career advancement, I would not stay here any longer. But it is a really good place to work if I don't have such ambitions (9ID2).

For work-life balance, she particularly emphasized the necessity of giving up, to some extent, at both the work and /or home areas, not performing jobs perfectly. In this respect, she had a priority toward her family with some abandonment of a higher career position and more money. However, since her decision was made voluntarily with her own value system, she could be satisfied with her current life, "So, I was not shaken by the offers. I will just stay here. I am happy now to work here" (9ID11).

Minjung

“I sincerely need my husband’s understanding and comfort about my stress, which is very important for my work-life balance. However, he doesn’t comfort me well with warm words. I know he tries to do his best in performing his roles as a breadwinner, a father, and a husband, but I often feel unfilled psychologically. Although my husband also said he is doing both work at work and home, frankly, I have more difficulty than him because I’m a mom. I want him to recognize my feelings.”

Minjung is 33 years old, married, and the mother of a two-year-old boy. Since earning a bachelor’s degree in Chinese language, she has worked at several Chinese-related corporations in Korea for several years. After getting married, Minjung sought another job near her new residence and has currently worked for an agency of a food company as an office coordinator.

Even though her original major was not well matched with her current job, her job satisfaction was quite high. “My current salary is not high and I cannot utilize my major in this company, but I think this is the best company where I can be compatible with my work and childcare.” Minjung found the major reason was “a good working environment for childcare due to time flexibility” (16ID8).

Since returning to work after her one-year maternity leave, she has utilized an arrangement of reduced work hours. She recalled,

Before having my child, my original work hours were from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. However, after returning to work, my biggest concern was the early time to send my son to daycare and the late time to pick him up due to my commuting time. So, I was hesitating about returning to work. As I really didn’t want to send my son to daycare very early in the morning, for all day long, I frankly talked about my issue with my boss. Fortunately, he allowed me to work a 2-hour reduced schedule. Since then, I’ve worked from 9 a.m. to around 4 p.m. (16ID5).

She thought that her case was very unique and lucky because this arrangement was not an official company policy but internally created by the consent of her manager. Minjung explained several components that made this new arrangement work. An important reason

she reported was the fact that her organization had a simple organizational structure due to the characteristics of a small private agency; although the agency belonged to a large food company it was considered a separate business entity. Her agency consisted of a manager, an office coordinator (Minjung), and sales people. Minjung was the only working group in her agency, and she had only one boss, the real decision maker in her agency, which provided an opportunity to communicate actively and directly with her manager. “When I have personal business, if I completely do my job, I can flexibly use my time. As I don’t have a co-worker, and my job is independent work, the time flexibility is possible” (16ID6).

During the interview, Minjung also emphasized her excellent job skills and job performance, “Basically, I work very well, without any mistakes. While working, I am very concentrated on my job and accurately and carefully perform my tasks. So, I got credit for the work from my manager, and he accommodated me” (16ID8). Additionally, as Minjung’s manager was also a father with a newborn baby, he understood the personal events related to her child and tried to accommodate her. Thanks to her boss’s consideration, after working reduced hours, her salary paid the same. Minjung was the only participant who received the same wage among the users of a reduced work hour arrangement.

As soon as Minjung finished her job, she rushed to the daycare to pick up her son. While talking about her evening after going back home, Minjung constantly expressed her physical and psychological exhaustion. Minjung said, to save her energy, she often has relied on a food service, or eating out. “Coming back home, I am very exhausted. It’s very hard to prepare dinner, physically and mentally. So, I’ve often lifted my burden by eating out, although my expenses for it have increased. If not, I feel the balance of all of my life might be broken” (16ID7).

Although Minjung's husband tried to do his best to support her, such as taking part in childcare, and housework, after work, she always felt more pressure caused by the roles of primary caregiver and traditional housewife; "No matter that I'm not good at performing both of the roles" (16ID10). Because of Minjung's psychological pressure for the accountability for multiple roles, she really wanted her husband's psychological support and sincere understanding of her stress for her work-life balance.

I sincerely need my husband's understanding and comfort about my stress, which is very important for my work-life balance. However, he doesn't comfort me well with warm words. I know he tries to do his best in performing his roles as a breadwinner, a father, and a husband, but I often feel unfilled psychologically in my heart. Although my husband also said he is doing both work at work and home, frankly, I have more difficulty than him because I'm a mom. I want him to recognize my feelings (16ID12).

Nami

"Regardless of earning a lot of money, I really want to work steadily in this society. Others may laugh at me, 'You're a mom. Why do you have such luxurious thinking?' But I believe when a mom is happy her child can be happy. I didn't want to say to my daughter, 'I abandoned everything for you. How dare you say such a thing?' I really didn't want to tell her this. So, I decided to go to law school."

Nami is 33 years old, married, and the mother with a 3-year-old daughter. She was one of the few participants who highly valued her professional role and tried to find her dream. After graduation with a major in business administration from a university, Nami worked in a foreign stock company in Korea for 3 years. While working, she passed an AICPA (American Institute of Certified Public Accountants) exam in Korea. Due to her well-matched career experiences and certified qualifications, she got an offer from a headhunter, and moved to a famous global financial appraisal company in Hong Kong. As Nami had a strong ambition to find and realize her dream in the wider world, she made a decision to work in a foreign country. When she first started to work in the company, she worked late, almost all night, to catch up on her new jobs. Even after becoming a lead financial data

analyst, she overworked from 7 to 9 p.m. without having dinner, although no one cared about leaving the office on time. Nami was generally satisfied with the good working environment and system, such as her supervisor's good feedback, flexible working options, and well-organized learning system. At the same time, however, she felt pressure from the company's high expectations from employees, requiring employees' good performance and constant personal development. Nami always tried to meet the expectations, and gained credit with her supervisors.

Yet, her marriage became a turning point for her work. After getting married, she felt frustrated living separated from her husband, who lived in Korea, and finally moved to the Korean branch of the company. Her good performance and her supervisor's trust in her helped Nami to come to the Korean branch because they created a new position for her. Compared to the company in Hong Kong, one of the hubs of the company, the size of the Korean branch was very small, consisting of only five employees, including her. The company atmosphere was also different; that is, her company originated from the United States, and the U.S. culture was considerably embedded in it, even in the Hong Kong branch. But the Korean branch had a mixed organizational culture, a strong Korean culture mixed with the U.S. culture. "If a foreign company comes to Korea, it becomes a Korean company" (11D13). Nami started to work with an acceptance of Korean culture such as having company dinners and reading others' minds.

While working in Korea, she gave birth to a daughter. Before her daughter was born, she put almost all her energy and time into her work. However, after becoming a mother, Nami seriously worried about how to balance her work and family. She wanted to be a good mother as well as a good professional. Yet, she felt more pressure on meeting her

supervisor's expectations that were already established before her marriage and the birth of her daughter. Nami did not want to be judged by the image of married women with a child, and worked harder than before.

I hated to listen to 'You're married and a mother with a child, so you're neglecting your job.' To keep my pride as a married woman, I worked harder with a dogged spirit. After an expectation of a person is formed, if the person doesn't show better outcomes, people think the person is changed. I didn't listen to that story (11D10).

To survive in the demanding work environment, she needed to send her daughter to her mother. Nami's mother has raised her daughter at her home since her daughter was 2 months old. Nami and her husband lived in Seoul, and her parents' home was in a city four hours distant from Seoul. Due to the long distance, she visited her daughter every other weekend and stayed three days from Friday to Sunday, or Saturday to Monday, using her vacation hours.

One day, her supervisor who knew about her story suggested a partial telecommuting arrangement so that Nami could work at her parents' home on every Friday. She was grateful for her supervisor's consideration and the good institution. However, it was not easy for her to use telecommuting effectively because of several difficulties. As she had to work at her parents' home, the working environment and facilities such as the Internet speed, international phone calls, and dual monitors were not sufficiently supported. Moreover, her job required her to respond quickly to requests and she had to stay in front of her computer all day. Nami felt that work and home were not well separated and rather decreased the work efficiency. Three months after she started telecommuting, she voluntarily stopped it because of the decreased efficiency. After that, as before, she went to see her daughter by using her vacations or summer hours—a work schedule in which employees can work reduced hours

during the summer season. This type of flexible work arrangement and many vacation days helped her to conveniently see her daughter.

After her daughter's birth, she felt she lost her way in life while experiencing a collision with work and family. For example, when she received good offers with better conditions from the Hong Kong and Singapore branches, she could not leave her baby and husband alone to follow the job. Nami could not help refusing the opportunity because of her changed situation. She said,

If I were a single, I would go without any hesitation, but I am married, and in my current situation where I chose my home, although good opportunities were given to me, I concluded my family is more important. So, I clearly gave them up (11D2).

Additionally, she felt limited in her job in the current company. In the very small size of the Korean branch, she could not expect any promotion, and the chances to demonstrate her abilities were very few. Although she felt responsible for her voluntary decision to come to Korea, as time went by, her concern about her future increased.

Nami was always very afraid of remaining as a stay-at-home mom, which was influenced by her mother's education since her childhood. Her mother quit her job when she married and lived as a housewife. She did not want her daughter to live like her, and always told Nami that women also should have a job, a source of economic power. This was the major reason why her mother has fully supported Nami. In addition to her emphasis on a strong work ethic, her daughter was also very important in her life. In the long term, Nami decided to seek a way that she could work longer in her profession, and balance her work and family with more flexibility. Last year, she finally resigned her job and entered a Korean law school to become a lawyer. She explained,

Although my mom has taken care of my daughter, it was not enough for me to just work my assigned tasks, because my company always expected more performance and

personal development from me. So, I couldn't go to see my daughter every week. I could freely use my vacations at my convenience, but it was not enough for my daughter's care. While living like that for more than one year, I thought it was time to make a decision about my family's and my future. I thought if I have a specialized job like a lawyer, my future might be more stable... even though it may also be hard for professional women to balance their work and life, other women's life are more challenging. Additionally, regardless of earning a lot of money, I really want to work steadily in this society. Others may laugh at me, 'You're a mom. Why do you have such luxurious thinking?' But I believe when a mom is happy her child can be happy. I didn't want to say to my daughter, 'I abandoned everything for you. How dare you say such a thing?' I really didn't want to talk like this. So, I decided to go to law school. (IID8)

Ooju

"I was more accustomed to my husband's absence at home. Instead, as my mom's support is enough, it's not that I definitely need his help."

Ooju is 34 years old, married, and the mother of 3-year-old daughter. After graduating from a university, majoring in aerospace engineering, she worked at an architecture company for several years. After her marriage, Ooju got an opportunity to go to the United States due to her husband's overseas training program, using her one-year leave. Since her childhood, Ooju has had "a dream of having a job related to English," and the opportunity made a turning point for her to think about a new job. Around the end of her leave, Ooju decided to quit the company to realize her real dream and find a more stable job. Then, she earned a TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) certificate and finally became an English teacher at a private institute. Ooju stated,

Before getting married, I had been in charge of road design at the company. The job required a lot of overtime and night work. The field had a very demanding working environment for women to work continuously, so there were few women employees. Coming back to Korea the year after we completed the overseas training program, I thought this job would make it difficult for me to be able to balance work and home. Originally, I had a dream of work related to English. After quitting the job, I earned a TESOL certificate and became an English teacher at a private institute.

She was really satisfied with her new job despite a lot of heavy work. “Although my work at the institute was intense, I really liked my students and teaching English. So, I taught English until the last month of my pregnancy” (11ID1).

After her baby was born, her return was taken for granted, but her institute’s director suddenly suggested another job, a foreign project coordinator in a Korean branch of an Italian-based inspection and expediting company. At that time, the director’s parents-in-law launched the company in Korea, and they were trying to find a coordinator who was fluent in English and had a mechanical engineering background. At first, Ooju was not happy with her boss’s suggestion, but when the offer of a telecommuting work arrangement was given to her, she decisively accepted it. Ooju thought it would be helpful for her childcare. “I didn’t like this job at first, but the director offered the telecommuting option from the beginning. Also, I could continue to use English in my work. So, I said, I will try to do that” (11ID1).

Ooju was a very active and positive person and adapted quickly in the new company. The thing that she appreciated the most was that she could enjoy the benefits of telecommuting, working at home twice a week. Among the all employees in the company, Ooju was the only user of telecommuting. Her unique job characteristics and tasks allowed her to telecommute.

Working at home is possible because I work most of my job through emails. I am a coordinator who finds appropriate inspectors for each project and recommends them. Only I can do my job because the job histories are different. Among the four coordinators, I am the only coordinator in charge of foreign agents (11ID2).

In addition to the possibility of working online, she added that her CEO’s thought of the necessity of telecommuting for more effective business management was strongly reflected.

My CEO thinks that telecommuting is necessary because I often work during nonworking hours. He thinks that if you work at night you can receive responses

more quickly from the foreign agencies and acquire more projects. If he didn't have any reasons, he could not allow my telecommuting (11ID9).

Although her telecommuting was initiated by the company's needs, she made the best use of it for her work and family balance. For example, Ooju flexibly adjusts her schedule when she has important personal business or family issues. When working at home, she was responsible for dropping her daughter off at school and picking her up, and she sometimes spent some time doing her housework such as cleaning or laundering. Ooju described the opportunity of telecommuting as increasing her self-esteem. "When my feeling is bad, or I can't work at home, I go to a coffee shop and work there. At that time, I thought that I am earning money as well as working during this time. So, all of my friends envy me. I feel that my self-esteem has increased" (11ID6). From time to time, she felt like she was working 24/7, but she believed that she was really blessed to work in this environment.

Ooju thought that work-life balance is deeply related to an individual's psychological satisfaction and self-esteem toward work and life areas. In this perspective, her satisfaction with work and life was very high. "The current working condition is the best for me because I can work, find my self-esteem, make money, and spend much more time with my kid. So, this [telecommuting] is a great opportunity for women" (11ID7, 8). However, despite her high work-life satisfaction, the proportion of her husband's role was very low because he could not spend time with the family due to his frequent business trips. "My husband is almost always not at home" (11ID10). Although she felt the lack of her husband's active involvement with domestic work, she accepted the current realities as time went by, and replaced her husband's role with her mother's help. "I was more accustomed to my husband's absence at home. Instead, as my mom's support is enough, it's not that I definitely need his help" (11ID10). In a sense, her low expectation for her husband was her own

strategy for work-life balance. Rather than quarreling with him or changing the current condition, she decided to choose a way to reduce her stress from the conflict with him by accepting her husband's situation and being thankful for her good working environment.

Pado

"Fortunately, my husband likes a career woman. My parents-in-law are also supportive. My children are growing well. The best thing was that I've had a great helper for my family. I felt like from several places, 'Go, go! go to work, work!' so, I didn't have any reasons to quit my job due to domestic excuses."

Pado is 40 years old, married, and the mother of two children, a 9-year-old boy and a 4-year-old girl. After graduating from a college of pharmacy, she has worked in foreign-based control research organizations (CROs) for 11 years. She was proud of herself that she was able to work without any career break, except for two maternity leaves. Pado was one of the few participants with high career aspirations. For the past 11 years, she strategically changed companies four times to increase her position and salary, which was common in her field. When I met her for the interview, it was a month after she had started her job in a new company. Pado looked very busy, but excited, anticipating her new projects and the role as a senior project manager.

In her previous company, Pado worked at home in the form of telecommuting for 5 years, only going to the office once a month for a meeting with staff. As the company was not big, and all employees worked online, they did not need a physical office, but instead used a virtual office. For this reason, her experiences at work and home were very different from other participants. For Pado, home had dual meanings as a home as well as a workplace. This place would be a blending area where the roles of mother, spouse, and employee could coexist. However, she was a very experienced user of telecommuting, and effectively managed her time on her jobs. On one hand, she made the best use of her

telecommuting in several ways. While employing telecommuting, she gave birth to her second child, and earned a master's degree in clinical pharmacology at the School of Pharmacy. She said,

When I was in my second company, my first child was born. At that time, I was very stressed and exhausted. Because of that, I think my first kid is suffering from an atopic skin disease even now. I didn't think of having the second child at that time, but while starting telecommuting, my life was more relaxed, and I thought I can have a second child. As I almost always had a meal at home during telecommuting, my second one didn't get any allergies. I also graduated from the School of Pharmacy, and earned a master's degree in clinical pharmacology. As you know, it's not easy to write a thesis. I put off my work later, or changed my schedule for the writing. For example, from 3 p.m. I wrote my thesis. If I didn't telecommute, I couldn't work at all (15ID6).

One of the reasons her full telecommuting was possible was that Pado was in a manager position. According to her, while entry-level employees visit medical centers and train people there about clinical tests, her role was to manage the working group. Another reason was that Pado was working with foreign agents. "A telecommuting arrangement is very common in my field because we often work with foreign companies" (15ID5). Due to the time difference in different regions, she needed to have more flexible time to effectively do her work. Additionally, Pado had the strongest backup resource of a live-in babysitter. Since her first child was born 9 years ago, she has employed a live-in babysitter. The helper takes care of all the housework and plays the role of babysitter instead of Pado. As Pado and her husband both have highly paid, specialized jobs, they could hire the babysitter for a long period of time.

During the interview, Pado was very grateful for her working environment and several supports. Because of this environment, her satisfaction with her work-life balance was very high.

Fortunately, my husband likes a career woman. My parents-in-law are also supportive. My children are growing well. The best thing was that I've had a great helper for my family. I felt like from several places, 'Go, go! go to work, work!' so, I didn't have any reasons to quit my job due to domestic excuses (15ID9).

Although she was one of the few participants with the best supportive environment at work and at home, Pado was also concerned about contingencies when her current workload and the children's care collided. As her responsibility for children's education was Pado's unique job at work, she was afraid of not faithfully fulfilling her role resulting from the unexpected collision between work and family. Work-family conflict for Pado might negatively affect her career continuity in the long term.

I am still satisfied with my job and this company. This job is interesting, but domestically if my job damages my children's lives, I may rethink my job. For example, whenever my son has an exam in school, if I have to leave for business trips... as he can't study by himself yet now, I should read with him. (15ID10).

Summary

My sixteen participants shared different stories regarding their work-life balance and flexible workplace arrangements. Their different backgrounds, including family backgrounds, organizational culture, the individual personalities, and/or personal values, made their experiences different. Despite their different stories, they had some common experiences. First, they have undergone role conflicts between work and family as a mother and an employee. In most cases, my participants tended to experience emotional conflicts, which was mainly connected to their strong responsibility as the primary caregiver for their child/children. When they were not fully satisfied with their role as a mother, they carried a feeling of guilt for their children, which ultimately had a negative influence on their general satisfaction with their work-life balance. Second, my participants have received many forms of support to maintain their current status of work and family balance. The leading sources of support were from their organizations and families, which will be further discussed in the

following section. Last, my participants tried to manage their work-life balance with their own strategies. Depending on their individual, family, or organizational resources, the strategies they chose varied. Their detailed descriptions for WLB strategies will be introduced.

Women's Experiences with Work-Life Balance

This section presents the findings regarding the first research question, “What are the experiences of the highly educated and married Korean female employees with work-life balance?” As a result of the data analysis, I identified six superordinate themes and thirteen subthemes from the sixteen participants’ interviews. The six superordinate themes are: (1) the meaning of “work-life balance” (2) support systems, (3) career aspiration: “thin and long” (4) concerns, (5) WLB strategies, and (6) hope: expectations for the future. The superordinate themes and their subthemes are presented in Table 4. In this section, I will discuss each superordinate theme and subtheme to understand the participants’ common experiences with work-life balance as well as their different contexts. In order to describe their experiences vividly, I included excerpts of participants’ interview transcripts for each related theme.

Table 4.

Superordinate Themes and Their Subthemes: Women's Experiences with WLB

| Superordinate Themes | Subthemes |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. The Meaning of “Work-Life Balance” | |
| 2. Support Systems | 2.1. Family |
| | 2.2. Colleagues |
| | 2.3. Live-in babysitter |

Table 4. Continued

| Superordinate Themes | Subthemes |
|--|---|
| 3. Career Aspiration: “Thin and Long” | 3.1. Strong craving for career continuity 3.2. Lack of desire for career advancement |
| 4. Concerns | 4.1. Childcare stress 4.2. Burnout 4.3. Personal life 4.4. Feeling out of the loop at work |
| 5. WLB Strategies | 5.1. “Be present” in their roles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Concentrating only on the role of mother, not the traditional role of spouse ○ Concentrating only on work ○ Image making as a working mother 5.2. Set lower expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Husband ○ Myself 5.3. Positive attitude 5.4. One-child strategy |
| 6. Hope: Expectations for the future | |

The Meaning of “Work-Life Balance”

When asked to define work-life balance, my participants shared different understandings. Although all the women tended to identify ‘life’ with the ‘family,’ or ‘home’ domain, their responses varied for the meaning of balance. Among the sixteen participants, four women (Ayoung, Herim, Jiu, and Inyoung) did not exactly describe the meaning of work-life balance. It was difficult for them to define the concept itself even though they had some viewpoints of work-life balance. Ayoung and Herim believed that the idea of balance is

very idealistic and it cannot be accomplished in reality, thereby making it difficult for them to define. On one hand, Ayoung, Herim, and Jiu agreed that work-life balance should be considered a social issue and include both genders, not an individual problem only for women. Except for these cases, the definitions of work-life balance identified by the other participants were comprehensively classified into three perspectives.

First, work-life balance, defined by the majority of participants (Bokyung, Chaeock, Dajung, Eunyoung, and Kyunghee), refers to a state of compatibility in which a person performs the assigned roles properly without any role conflicts between work and family. Although each participant had a different idea of what work-life balance was, they all agreed with the core concept of the compatibility between work and family. For example, Kyunghee stated,

I think work-life balance is the compatibility, or coexistence that I can maintain work and home without having a negative influence on either domain (5ID10).

Bokyung expressed,

Work-life balance is not to make any conflicts in performing both roles at work and home. While my childcare should not interfere with my work, my work should not interfere with my family roles at the same time (6ID7).

Furthermore, Chaeock stressed the importance of establishing clear boundaries between work and family so that her life roles did not conflict with each other.

I want to perform my roles faithfully by establishing clear boundaries so that I can concentrate on each role in each domain. That's the balance I wish, because I'm not doing that in reality when I still bring my work home (8ID8).

Second, some participants (Fangsook, Lami, Oaju, and Pado) viewed work-life balance as the matter of an individual's psychological satisfaction and less psychological distress in both work and family. Lami said,

I can probably say, the balance is that I feel satisfied with both spheres, respectively. In explaining one's work-life balance, it's important to have a sense of satisfaction while working at a company as well as staying at home (9ID10).

Ooju also shared her thoughts:

I think the balance starts with my satisfaction. My satisfaction makes my home peaceful, and I can share the feeling of happiness with my child and husband, which will eventually make even my colleagues happy at work. If I can keep holding the feeling of satisfaction, it'll spill over into the work and family domains, naturally being balanced (11ID7).

In order to make this concept work, Pado emphasized lower psychological distress in performing both roles at work and in the family.

When I can have a modest amount of work and less psychological distress so that I can do both my roles well at work and in my family, I think the balance will be achieved (15ID6).

Third, for some participants (Eunyoung, Gyungock, and Nami), work-life balance was deeply associated with one's faithful role performances at work and in the family based on appropriate time distribution. The distinguishing point is that they highlighted an individual's proper time distribution in explicating the meaning of balance. In this regard, Gyungock made an interesting and specific meaning of the balance,

I don't know exactly the meaning of balance in work-life balance, but anyway, I believe the balance is that I can loyally work my jobs given the time and space. Specifically, when I can plan and utilize the given finite time properly, I believe it's a balance. This thought may be vague, but if I can anticipate my work schedule every day and plan my jobs at work and in the family according to the schedule, I can establish the boundaries to some extent. When I worked at my previous company, my closing hour to get off work was not guaranteed because of frequent night overtime, so I couldn't plan and manage how to use my time for both work and family. But after moving to the current company, I can regularly go to work at 8 a.m. and finish at 6 p.m. So, I can control my time and plan my schedule. For me to perform multiple roles at work and at home, this is the balance (14ID8).

That is, Gyungock viewed balance as the condition in which she can have the autonomy to take control over her time.

Last, Minjung focused on the meaning of contingency-based balance. She particularly emphasized an individual's endeavors, including the adjustment of work- or family-related events, to find his or her own balance depending on the context. Minjung recounted,

I don't think that the balance is that an individual is equally involved with his or her work and family and gains the same results as a result of his or her efforts. ... The balance is a very challenging issue. For me, when someone looks at me, the balance of my home may be broken because my house is messed up as I don't have enough time to clean the house. However, I feel my psychological involvement and attachment toward my kid is getting deeper... At my current condition, I'm not pursuing a perfectly equal contribution to each domain. I try to meet the balance by negotiating my realities. For example, these days, I just do the minimum of domestic work and rely on eating out while focusing on my jobs. If not, all my balance I'm maintaining now might be broken. This is my own balance, currently (16ID7).

In short, the participants defined the meanings of work-life balance from four perspectives. They are: (a) a state of compatibility without role conflicts, (b) an individual's appropriate time distribution, (c) a high psychological satisfaction with less psychological distress, and (d) contingency-based balance.

Support Systems

My sixteen participants have been supported by a variety of parties to balance their work and life. All of the participants have had at least one leading support system on which they partially or totally relied. The distinctive themes for the support system were identified as the following: family, colleagues, and babysitters.

Family. The most prominent supporter identified by the participants was their families, including their mothers, mothers-in-law, and husbands. A total of twelve participants (Ayoung, Bokyung, Dajung, Eunyoung, Fangsook, Gyungock, Herim, Inyoung, Kyunghye, Minjung, Nami, and Oju) out of the sixteen women (75%) have been or are being supported by their mothers or mothers-in-law regarding child care. In addition, for six women among the twelve participants, their mothers or mothers-in-law have fully taken over

the care of their grandchildren as primary caregivers from the birth of the children to the present. Here, the meaning of “having fully taken over the care of their grandchildren” refers to the physical dedication that is required to raise a child; such as sending their grandchildren to the daycare centers or schools, picking them up, preparing their meals, bathing, and putting them to bed. In these cases, to give their full support, the mothers or mothers-in-law brought their grandchildren to their home and directly raised them, or they took care of their grandchildren by living in the children’s home during the weekdays. All the participants who have constantly received support stated that they would never have been able to reach and maintain their current careers without the help of their mothers and mothers-in-law. Ayoung said,

If I didn’t have my mother and mother-in law’s full support for my son’s childcare, I would never have earned my doctoral degree and reached my current position. I started my doctoral program at a university in a different city when my son was two months old. At that time, we were a commuting couple. My mother-in law completely raised him at her home until he turned five years old. She also came to the U.S. to take care of my son for six months while I was working as a postdoctoral researcher. Then, after I started to work at the current company, my mom took care of my son for two years until he was eleven years old. I received lots of support from the two mothers. Without their support, I would never have reached my current position (2ID7).

Fangsook also said,

My mom told me ‘I will take care of your son. So, I want you to continue to work as much as you can’ (13ID1). From my son’s birth to the present, my mom has looked after my son. He grew up at my mom’s home until he was 4 years old. After he became a kindergartener, my mom stayed at my home to take care of my son during the weekdays and goes back to her home during the weekend. Thanks to her full support, I could focus on my job and have gotten promoted fast (13ID9).

In some cases, in order to support the participants’ families, the parents or parents-in-law voluntarily moved their residences near the participants’ homes. In other cases, the participants opted to move to be near their parents’ residences in order to receive their parents’ support. For example, Herim’s parents-in-law recently moved to the city where

Herim and her husband reside and have lived with her to take care of her son. Similarly, Eunyoung's parents, who had been raising her daughter for five years at their home, recently moved near her apartment to support Eunyoung's family. For Gyoungock, in order to ask her mother-in-law to pick up her children from the daycare, she moved to an apartment near her mother-in-law's residence.

Some of the participants partially relied on their mothers or mothers-in-law's childcare support when they had occasional events such as a company dinner or working overtime at night, or let their mothers assume partial childcare roles on a regular basis such as taking the children to school and picking them up every day. Kyunghee recounted,

Both my parents and in-laws are willing to support me when I have an important company meeting, company dinner, night overtime, or business trip. I really appreciate their support. As my husband has been almost excluded from [the] parenting role, I think my two parents actively support me instead of him (5ID8).

For most of my participants, their parents (especially mothers and mothers-in law) were the best replacement for the participants' roles of primary caregivers in that they could sincerely be trusted. In this respect, Fangsook spoke with emphasis, "Childcare by their parents is the most critical key for most married female employees not to quit their jobs" (13ID18).

In addition to their mothers' support, two participants (Ayoung and Bokyoung) said that their husbands' support was very important to maintain their current state of work and life. While many participants' husbands did not actively participate in domestic work and parenting roles, Ayoung and Bokyoung's husbands vigorously supported their spouses with an equal parenting partnership. Particularly, as demonstrated previously in Ayoung's profile, her husband has played an important role as the primary caregiver so that Ayoung can focus on pursuing her career.

My husband is the strongest support for my career. He almost raised my son by himself during my postdoctoral period in the U.S. My role as a traditional mom was not big (2ID3).

Bokyoung's husband also tried to equally share their domestic work, usually focusing on housework such as cleaning the house, doing the laundry, and washing dishes, while Bokyoung took on the tasks of preparing meals or taking care of her son. Bokyoung said, "I am most grateful to my husband, who supports me in my current life" (6ID1).

Colleagues. Some of the participants pointed out that a good relationship between their colleagues and them was a big support in making their work and family life smoother. Nami was one of the participants who had a strong trusting relationship with her supervisors. She shared her experiences,

We consisted of global team members. My boss worked in England. As we couldn't meet in person very often, I tried to be more communicative with him. Then, when I had personal difficulties, I frankly shared them with him. At the same time, I also tried to remember my boss's personal events and care about that. Through these efforts, I think we built a good relationship, and I gained my boss's trust. Thanks to the good relationship, when I had a miscarriage, I could take sick leave freely due to his concern. And after my baby's birth, I was given an opportunity for telecommuting during my childcare (1ID10).

Herim also emphasized the importance of her colleagues' support for work-life balance.

When my baby was sick, my colleagues accommodated me a lot. When I left early to take care of my son, they often handled my job on my behalf. I'm very lucky that I can work with such good colleagues (3ID9).

In a similar vein, Dajung was grateful for her supervisor's sincere consideration and understanding of her children's issues. She stated,

My supervisor is a man. He's of a similar age with me. So, his children's ages are also similar, five and eight years old, respectively. As he knows about children of this age, he understands me very well from a parent's perspective. When my children were sick, when I told him, 'I might come to work late tomorrow so that I can take care of them,' he was willing to let me do it, as long as I took good care of my job, whether through email or phone calls. He didn't care about the method (3ID8-9).

Live-in Babysitter. Pado was the only participant who had hired a live-in babysitter for a long time, nine years. Pado's career efforts have been supported by the live-in babysitter from her first son's birth to the present. Especially, as Pado has telecommuted for almost six years, in order to balance her work and family roles, she needed to have someone who could support her family roles so that she could concentrate on her work. She relied on her babysitter for all the domestic tasks (e.g. cooking, cleaning, laundering, and childcare) except for the education of her children. Pado said,

I have few tasks as a mother and a wife at home. My babysitter takes care of almost all the domestic chores. I don't do housework very much. Instead, my major role at home is my children's education. I read with my first son, who is a first grader at the elementary school, because he can't study by himself yet (15ID4).

Although it was not common to hire a live-in babysitter for a long time due to the high expense, this couple's financial capacity made it possible. Specifically, Pado was a senior project manager at a foreign-based control research organization, and her husband was an ophthalmologist running a private hospital. As this couple both had highly paid, specialized jobs, they could consistently utilize a live-in babysitter rather than depending on the support of her parents or parents-in-law like many other participants.

Career Aspirations: "Thin and Long"

The most interesting theme of the study was the dual perspectives on career aspirations shared by my participants. All my sixteen participants were very eager to work constantly for a long time as much as they could. To be specific, they had several reasons for their career continuity, including economic support for their family, being a role model for their children, and self-fulfillment. Nevertheless, the majority of the women did not have a strong desire for career advancement. One major reason was their family-related concerns or responsibilities, especially childcare. Since these participants devoted less time and energy to

work due to their childcare, they believed that they were less likely to advance their careers, and their lack of career aspirations is a direct result of their option for childcare. In short, in Gyungock's words, most of the participants' attitudes or strategies for their careers can be characterized as "thin and long," which means pursuing low or moderate positions with less pressure about the responsibilities so that they could consistently perform both roles at work and at home rather than seeking a high position with high responsibilities and risk.

Strong craving for career continuity. As mentioned above, all of the sixteen participants expressed their strong craving to have a continuous career for several reasons: a) financial support, b) being a role model for their children, and c) self-fulfillment. The biggest reason presented by half of the women (Bokyoung, Chaeock, Fangsook, Gyungock, Inyoung, Jiu, Minjung, and Ooju) was the economic benefit of their jobs. Most of them had a realistic perspective on their work with an emphasis on their financial support for their family. Although some of them felt a sense of guilt, that is, they cannot fully take care of their children as working mothers, they believed their economic support for their family, including their children and parents, would enhance the quality of their family's life. Minjung shared,

Actually, after giving birth, I wanted to quit my job and concentrate only on raising my son at home. But, if I just remained a stay-at-home mom, my family would have more financial difficulty than before (16ID8). Although I was worried about not spending more time with my son, I think it's a better way for him. If I earn money, I can buy better food and toys for him (16ID1).

Similarly, Gyungock demonstrated the mixed feelings about her job,

I can live without work though... the biggest reason for my work is so that I can live a more affluent life. This reason accounts for 70-80 percent of the purpose of my work... Yet, if I have to choose one of the two, work and family, I will definitely abandon my job. Because, anyway, I should protect my family, but can live without my job (14ID13). Despite my concern about my children, I'd like to work for a long time, as long as my ability allows me. But sometimes, I don't know my future when considering providing better care for my children (14ID19).

Fangsook also explained the primary purpose of her work,

Although I've worked for quite a long time so far, frankly, I think the purpose of my work is earning money. This is related to the issue of will I enjoy my life more affluently using the money, or have no money and not enjoy life? The 80 percent of the aim of my job is money (13ID9). With the money I earn, I think I can give my family a big help, financially, to my parents and parents-in-law. So, I'm very satisfied with it (13ID19).

The second reason for work that was frequently mentioned by the participants (Bokyung, Dajung, Eunyoung, Jiu, Namai, and Ooju) was to become a good role model for their children. As introduced previously in Eunyoung's profile, Eunyoung kept sharing that her biggest motivation and purpose for the current job is her daughter. She wanted her daughter to recognize and respect her as a professional career woman, not treating her as just a mother.

The biggest reason I work is to be a role model for my daughter. I want her to develop her dream when she grows up by watching my professional life (12ID7).

Jiu shared her experience by comparing the interrupted career she had previously with the current life since she returned to the workplace recently. As she was the only participant who experienced a career break caused by child rearing, Jiu was very grateful to regain her precious job. Because of that, she did not want to miss this job opportunity. Furthermore, she wanted to be a career woman of whom her children are proud.

I am often burned out because I feel I should take care of everything, washing dishes, taking care of my children, and my job. No matter how tired I am, it's definitely better for me to work. As I had been a stay-at-home mom for several years, I knew that my previous life as only a mom of children was not happy for me. At that time, I was very depressed for some reason. After getting the new job, I'm living harder than before. If I quit this job, it would be much more difficult for me to get a job again. I don't want to miss this opportunity. Consequently, working is very good for me as well as for my children. Then, I want to show my children, 'Mom is doing something very hard.' Simply saying, I let them think, 'My mom does not just stay at home but works very hard with a job' (4ID12).

Likewise, Dajung strongly expressed her desire to work for the sake of her children.

I really want to keep working now and forever. I thought my daughters might dislike that I'm a working mom. But one day, they said, they'll definitely have a job like a mom, me, when they grow up. They think I'm a scientist because I'm working at a cosmetic-related research institute. So, they're proud of me, who is a scientist, and respect my job. I want to show them... although I'm a married woman with children, I can keep working, not just raise children at home. That's one of my dreams (8ID12).

Last, some participants identified self-fulfillment or self-realization as a motive for keeping their jobs. Fangsook continuously shared the thought of her career during her interview with me.

The rest of the 20 percent for the purpose of my job is self-fulfillment and self-realization. Fortunately, my current job fits well with my personal traits. As my job is interesting and helpful for my career, I can keep working (13ID9).

Gyungock reflected on her experience,

When I was only focusing on raising my children during my maternity leave for a year, I felt that a stay-at-home mom's life would not be my way. My life satisfaction wasn't totally achieved by only the role of mother. I'm a highly educated woman and have a dream to achieve something for my career. As caring for my children did not completely fulfill my life, I think one of the reasons for me to work is for self-fulfillment (14ID13).

Lack of desire for career advancement. Although all the participants spoke of a strong desire to continue to work, ironically, half of the participants (Bokyung, Chaeock, Gyungock, Inyoung, Jiu, Kyunghee, Lami, and Minjung) had little interest in career advancement. Then, an interesting finding related to this is that all these eight participants were taking care of their child or children mostly by themselves. In other words, the other eight participants who received full support for childcare from their parents or a live-in babysitter tended to have a higher desire for career achievement and promotions. The participants who are the primary caregivers lacked interest in career advancement.

Among those with low career ambitions, many participants felt sorry about their lack of devotion to work, compared to the period when they were single or before they had children.

Because of the added family responsibility as a mother, these women put childcare first, and could not spend more time for work or to participate in company events than before. They recognized that such choices might negatively influence their career advancement, therefore they did not set high expectations on career advancement. Instead, most of them were simply grateful for the opportunity to maintain their careers while raising their children with such appreciation.

For childcare, Gyungock moved to the current public company to have more flexible time for childcare despite a lower position and salary. She had to sacrifice.

I moved to the current company for the purpose of childcare. If I just thought of my career achievement or money, I should've stayed at the previous company. While raising my two children as a mother, my dream that I had about my new job has decreased. I don't have any desire to show high performance, or any ambition to rise high in my profession. Rather, I just want to survive at this company, thin and long, while working hard on my assigned tasks. I don't have any strong desire or passion for career achievement or advancement (14ID1).

Inyoung, who has served as a manager at a top-tier electronics company, had a career attitude similar to Gyungock's,

Although I work hard on my assigned job, I try not to be totally immersed in my work. If I use all my energies for my work, it would influence my children's care. If I have a strong commitment to work, 'I must work for this company, or I will go to a higher position,' I might devote more time to work for the company. However, I don't have a strong desire to advance my career. It's very difficult... but I want to balance my family and work properly (10ID9).

Chaeock shared her thoughts of the aim of her career,

I don't think I pursue a great vision for my job. While raising my kid as a working mom, I've been very stressed and argued a lot with my husband. As I felt much pressured by the role of mother as the primary caregiver, my career aspirations gradually decreased. In a sense, this thought may be a self-justification of mine. 'As I'm a mother with a child, it's hard to invest my energy in working at the company.' Because of my lack of investment in my job, I don't think I'm working for my career success. These days, I think that the major aim to work for this company is an economic reason. I am questioning how hard I should work for this company (7ID8).

Concerns

As all of the participants were simultaneously performing multiple roles as mother, spouse, and employee, they felt that their commitment to work, family, or both were not sufficient. Caused by their feelings of incomplete dedication to both areas, they had mixed feelings about work and family. Four prominent concerns were shared by the participants: childcare stress, burnout, personal life, and feeling out of the loop at work.

Childcare stress. The most dominant concern reported by more than half of the participants (Ayoung, Bokyoung, Chaeock, Eunyoung, Gyungock, Inyoung, Jiu, Minjung, and Nami) was about the stress associated with childcare. The leading issue about childcare was deeply linked to the feeling of guilt toward their children. The participants felt sorry that they could not spend more time with their children due to their work-related events. As almost all the participants recognized themselves as primary caregivers, they deepened this feeling of guilt by comparing themselves to stay-at-home moms. The younger the ages of the women's children, the more stress they felt. Sadly, this feeling carried over into the women's psychological distress in general.

Chaeock shared her sentiment about her childcare stress,

I think children must be fully loved and cared for by their parents, especially when they're very young, it should be more. Because of this belief, I was very stressed regarding not focusing on only my son. While raising my young son, I frequently argued with my husband. It was also very hard to find a good kindergarten last year while I was working at the same time (7ID8). I felt sorry that I didn't prepare wonderful meals for him [son] either. This feeling led me to try to cut off my work and run to him (7ID10).

However, as her son grew up, Chaeock felt less stressed about childcare over time.

This year, one good thing is that as he grows up, I feel I have less stress. As my son started to wash his hands and face by himself, I'm saving my energy and time for childcare, which helps to decrease my childcare stress (7ID10).

For Nami, when asked about her family roles, she spilled out the following for three minutes, “sorry, guilty, gloomy, always caring about what others’ think, and feeling like the very bottom of the food chain.” Such expressions are reflective of her heavy psychological distress as a working mother. Additionally, she confessed her internal conflict between the traditional gender role and an ideal life of a professional woman,

I wanted to think freely and live differently. But after being a wife and a mother in Korea, I couldn’t depart from the standard pattern as a mom and a wife, and rather, kept criticizing myself in my heart by comparing myself with the standard. ‘You’re the wife of a man, but why don’t you assist your husband well? You’re the mom of a daughter. Why don’t you look after your kid by yourself instead of fully relying on your mom’s support? Sometimes, I also need a rest and want to put all my roles down. However, because of the complicated and uneasy feelings, I always feel like I have a bone stuck in my throat. I always feel sorry for my kid and my husband for some reason, which often makes me gloomy. One day, I thought, ‘What am I doing? I’ve always tried to curry favor with others, my husband, my daughter, and my boss, and where have I gone?’ I feel my life is full of walking on eggshells. My friend, who is also a working mom, said to me, she feels that she’s at the very bottom of food chain and everyone blames her. She can’t complain even to her babysitter because of a concern that she might quit her babysitting job. I feel the same (1ID4).

Gyungock was one of the participants with a strong sense of guilt. While working at the company, she regularly called her mother-in-law, who played a role in taking her children to the daycare and picking them up, to look after her children. She said that her revolving concern about her children in her mind would be closely related to the feeling of guilt about lack of childcare.

During my absence, my children come and go somewhere, and another person, who is not me, takes care of them. They’re on my mind at all times although I’m physically staying at the company. At work, I call my mother-in-law the same time everyday, around 9 a.m. after they go to the daycare and 4 p.m. after they come back home. After checking on their status, I feel relieved then. I think I feel uneasy about the time I can’t spend with my children. This feeling may be caused by a kind of feeling of guilt that I can’t look after my children during my work hours (14ID5).

Jiu connected most of the working mothers’ feeling of guilt with conservative Korean culture,

Korean culture is very conservative. If moms send their children to daycare and go to work, this society sees these women bad mothers and makes them feel guilty. ‘Why don’t you care for your kids on your own?’ My feeling was the same. The perception ‘working moms are sinners’ is still prevalent in Korea. The recognition in the society as a whole must be changed (4ID19).

Burnout. Many of the participants (Chaeock, Dajung, Gyungock, Jiu, Kyunghee, Minjung, and Pado) experienced a state of emotional and physical exhaustion caused by prolonged stress and pressure associated with their multiple roles. Particularly, Gyungock, Jiu, and Minjung, who mostly took care of their child or children alone without any other support, complained about their physical exhaustion more than the other women. Jiu elaborated,

Basically, I don’t have good physical strength. When I get up in the morning, my day usually starts with doing the dishes I didn’t finish last night. Then, I get ready to go to work and send my children to school and kindergarten (4ID12). Especially, when I started to work after the long period of my career-interruption, I was extremely tired and exhausted. Sometimes, it was hard for me to breathe. I thought I may die. I live continuously like that. It was too much that I should take responsibilities for my job and children’s care at the same time. These days, I’m getting accustomed to this life but it’s still not light or easy for me (4ID11).

Likewise, while Gyungock described her physical and psychological burnout in everyday life, told about her difficulty with finding appropriate ways to reduce her stress. Gyungock explained,

My distress level is around 110 points out of 100. I’m not a person who expresses my feelings. I think regarding the problems with no answer, I’ve constantly received the same intensity of stress everyday from both work and home. I can’t even relax at home during the weekend [because of my children]. I don’t have any memories of when I took a rest [at home]. Sometimes, my tremendous stress suddenly explodes. If I can find the way to solve this stress I may do so. But I know, anyway, the same stress will come again, and it cannot be removed in my current realities. So, I don’t have any will to solve this problem and know that I can’t find the way (14ID15).

For Pado, although her satisfaction with work-life balance was very high with the best supportive systems at work and home, she also pointed out that her physical and

psychological burnout resulting from the multiple roles at work and family is the major obstacle to her work-life balance. Furthermore, despite the good work and family environments, Pado also underwent an internal conflict between her traditional gender role as a mother and her professional role as a career woman. This pressure became a negative component to exacerbate her burnout in general.

I can give 90 points out of 100 for my satisfaction with work-life balance. The reason for the minus 10 points is that I'm physically challenged because I should perform the multiple jobs, here and there. Also, my revolving thought, the dilemma, 'Why can't I quit my job and live like other stay-at-home moms?' bothers me (15ID12).

In a similar vein, after Minjung suffered from serious fatigue, she realized that her physical strength is the most important factor to maintain her work-life balance.

To better balance work and life, the most critical thing is my mental and physical health. First and foremost, I found that if my physical condition was poor I couldn't control myself, physically and mentally. When I was very sick with fatigue, I couldn't do anything, not taking care of my baby or taking a rest at home. These situations made me more stressed. So, I realize that maintaining my health is very important (16ID9).

Personal life. For some participants (Chaeock, Dajung, Fangsook, Gyungock, and Kyunghee), the fact that they do not have much of a personal life became an issue for them. The most critical and urgent problem faced by all the participants was their children's care. As they usually looked after their children after coming home from work at the expense of time for rest, it was very hard for these women to gain any private time to do something productive or fun. Regarding this issue, the participants expressed their desire to have a personal life for different reasons such as professional development or leisure time. Specifically, Dajung, Fangsook, and Kyunghee felt the lack of professional development and desired to have time for self development. Meanwhile, Gyungock and Kyunghee wanted to have some leisure time such as meeting friends, taking a trip, or just taking a rest at home.

Fangsook shared her concern about the lack of professionalism in more depth.

Recently, I have a big concern about my profession. As I have worked for this company for 15 years, I think I should have become a professional career woman with expert knowledge. However, I couldn't fully focus on my work due to childcare. So, I feel my professionalism was less developed, or even waned. This is a big stress of mine that I might not become a competent person corresponding to the 15 years. I need to keep developing myself, but it's very hard to find time to do it (13ID13).

Dajung seriously discussed her aspirations for professional development. Furthermore, she especially made an impressive discussion point in her conflicts with her personal time and the rest, meaning the sum of work- and family-related issues.

The issue of work or family was always more important and urgent to me than my personal-related events. In the meantime when I got behind, my internal conflict between my personal time and the others, work and family, was increased. Although I got used to the conflict between work and family at one moment as my children grew up, having my personal time is an ongoing issue...I often feel that my competence or capacities I built up in school to support my professionalism or career are almost running out. Although I've engaged in experiential learning at the company, it's very hard to find a time to learn a language such as English, or to do exercises. Simply saying, the time for self-development; I don't have it...When my children were very young, it was harder to take care of them and work at the same time. However, after my kids became elementary school students, the two values [focus on work and my child] to balance my work and life were changed. My current interest in work-life balance is the balance between the sum of work and my child and my personal life (8ID12).

On the one hand, Chaeock had a dream of finding her "lost life" caused by her full devotion to childcare. She planned to build a personal life in the near future.

If my son grows up a little bit more, and my burden for childcare will be reduced, I'd like to find another part to my life, something for enjoying life. Trips, sports, or anything else I can enjoy. I was very depressed and distressed about having to spend my life for both work and family. I couldn't do what I wanted, meeting my friends, going to see a movie, or taking a trip. Actually, work and childcare are not all for one's work-life. It's my goal to find the rest, my personal life and happiness (7ID9).

Feeling out of the loop at work. Some of the participants, Gyungock and Jiu, for example, often felt left out at work. As these women usually left the office on time for childcare, they did not have many opportunities to join company dinners. This meant losing

chances to hang out with their colleagues and build camaraderie, which is very important in the Korean organizational culture. Consequently, the women's seldom attendance at company dinners and their few opportunities for overtime at night not only made them feel out of the loop, but also had a negative impact on their peer evaluations. Sadly, Gyungock believed that she should accept this reality calmly because it is a result of her choice.

Gyungock said,

Although I usually get off work on time, most of my colleagues work late into the night. They know why I can't stay longer to work and leave early. As this organization allows me to make this choice freely unlike my previous company, I'm taking advantage of it. Even though I made this choice, I always feel out of the loop at the office. While my colleagues work overtime and get together for a drink after work, their companionship naturally becomes stronger. As I'm a mother with children it's hard to not only work late but also join the company dinner. It naturally influences my peer evaluation. So, it's not a surprise that my peer evaluation isn't high. I think I should tolerate the result of my choice. Anyway, I'm fine because I can take care of my kids... but I always feel uncomfortable everywhere I go, when I go to work or get off from work (14ID10).

Jiu experienced a similar feeling caused by her unique position as "Happy Employee" in the company. The position of "Happy Employee" was created as a national policy in some corporates for career-interrupted women to support their work-life balance. According to the operation policy, Jiu worked only 6 hours a day between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. However, while working as the first "Happy Employee" for one year, Jiu often felt she was being excluded in the process of knowledge and company news-related sharing by other full-time employees working regular hours. Despite the unfair treatment, Jiu thought she should bear this situation because she is responsible for her choice of working as a "Happy Employee." The expression, "bearing the responsibility for the choice," was commonly used by Gyungock and Jiu. Jiu stated,

Sometimes, I wonder, 'Are we outsiders in this company?' I have a weird feeling that we don't really belong to this company as members. Compared to the full time

employees working 40 hours a week, we [full time part-time employees] don't have much time to communicate and interact with them because we don't normally join the company dinner at the end of our workday. So, I feel it's hard to be well integrated into the team. Often, I feel left out in the process of knowledge and other information sharing. When I found out that only I didn't know about the company news or events and everyone else in my department knew I was not happy. At that time, I thought it might be better to work as the traditional full-time employee. As my position is a Happy Employee, I think I should bear and overcome every difficulty that can occur in this position. I understand the difference between happy employees and other full-time employees is inevitable, rather than discrimination, but I still feel upset (4ID15).

Work-Life Balance Strategies

While my sixteen participants were juggling their multiple roles, they developed a variety of strategies to help them achieve work-life balance. Among them, four strategies were mentioned most frequently. They are: (a) "be present" in their roles, (b) set lower expectations, (c) positive attitude, and (d) one child strategy. While some strategies such as 'set lower expectations' and 'positive attitude' were more focused on the psychological or emotional perspectives, the other two strategies, including 'be present' in their roles' and 'one child strategy' were more close to physical strategies. Most of the participants utilized mixed strategies in both domains to find their own optimal balance for work and life.

"Be present" in their roles. It was one of the most commonly used strategies for my participants to carry out their assigned roles and duties faithfully at work and at home. Regarding the participants' attitudes, I found two interesting points. First, many participants tended to be faithful to only some selective roles on which they set a higher value. For example, at home, while many participants did have a few roles, they focused on only the role of mother. At work, some participants only concentrated on completing their tasks without engaging in any other activities such as hanging out with colleagues. Second, some participants made the best use of their multiple identities as a working mother at each domain. In this case, at work, some women tried to find ways (e.g; few attendances at

company dinners, getting off work on time, etc.) to be faithful to their role of mother by creating the image of a mother for their colleagues. In contrast, at home, some women asked for better understanding from their family by highlighting the image of an employee. That is, they used the strategy of switching their identities as a working mother. Based on the analysis, three subthemes were identified: a) concentrating only on the role of mother, not the traditional role of spouse, b) concentrating only on work, and c) image making as a working mother.

Concentrating only on the role of mother, not the traditional role of spouse. When my participants were asked about the role of spouse, they all considered the role of wife based on traditional gender roles. “The wife’s roles I think are... when my husband comes home I serve delicious food and make a comfortable and cozy atmosphere so that he can take a rest” (Gyungock, 14ID4). In terms of the traditional wife’s roles they believed, all participants but Lami said that they seldom perform the traditional roles as a wife, but just concentrate on the roles of mother. The only participant who does not have a child, Lami, was faithful to her traditional wife’s roles, spending her time at home doing all domestic chores (e.g; preparing meals, cleaning her home, laundering, ironing, and washing dishes). Lami said,

My husband is very conservative. He rarely does any housework. So, I need more time to take care of the domestic work. If I become lazy in doing it, my house will be messed up. He’s a very typical Korean guy (9ID13).

Except for Lami, all of the participants determined their priorities regarding their multiple roles, and they put the roles of mother and employee before their traditional wives’ roles. A major reason for such prioritization was their critical parenting period with children ranging from 2 to 11 years old. As almost all the women served as primary caregivers, they

needed to save their energy and time by reducing at least one role, the spousal role, which is considered by them as relatively less important. In their current lives, the top priorities were the roles of mother and employee. In order to balance their current work and life, many participants chose this strategy; *concentrating only on the role of mother, instead of spouse*.

Several participants shared their experiences.

Bokyoung recounted,

I don't have special roles as a spouse, [my role is] just living together. I don't think that I will do something for my husband as a wife. I'm just focusing on my work and my kid. We're assisting each other in raising our son. For example, if I work late, he takes care of our son. If I prepare a meal, he does laundry. These days, when my husband, or I have a problem, it's very hard to set aside time to solve it together like before.

Dajung stated,

I don't think I deeply care about my husband as a wife. He works for the same company, and we're colleagues. As he is not a young-generation husband, he enjoys more hanging out with his friends and working at the company rather than doing parenting roles. However, as I should simultaneously perform the two roles, raising our young twin girls as well as working hard at the company, I couldn't handle everything faithfully. So, I clearly told my husband, 'While working and raising children, I can't be faithful to the roles of wife. There's no one who can catch three rabbits at the same time.' As I think the persons who need my support more are our young kids, not an adult, my husband, I politely told him, 'Please take care of your business on your own. For example, setting the table for his dinner.' Setting the table is not the job that must be done by only me, right? So, I said to him, I want to concentrate on childcare, plus my work (8ID1).

Eunyoung stated,

Actually, my family domain is really child-centered. When I get up in the morning, I quickly make a simple breakfast and feed her [my daughter] first. After she finishes her meal, I eat breakfast. After that, my husband prepares his breakfast by himself, and eats. This pattern, almost eating breakfast individually, often occurs. When talking about my family life with my colleagues, they often ask, 'Why aren't you concerned about your husband, not only focusing on your daughter?' However, I don't have enough energy and time to care for him. Because of my lack of physical strength, I'm easily exhausted even by small physical activities. For this reason, I am pouring my energy as much as I can hold for only our daughter. As I already used up my energy for her, I don't have any energy to spare for my husband (12ID3).

Concentrating only on work. As a WLB strategy, some participants, such as Bokyung, Chaeock, Gyungock, and Minjung, stressed their devotion to their jobs in the workplace. They said that their daily life at work was full of their dedication to their jobs to complete the occupational tasks. Since they were under pressure to leave on time or earlier than other colleagues because of childcare, they concentrated only on their work without any down time during the limited daily work hours. They tried to get the most out of work hours by reducing or giving up their leisure time for hanging out with their colleagues. The tight work hours was considered a stressor in their work and life balance.

Gyungock said,

I just focus on completing my jobs at work. I don't usually hang out or chat with my colleagues. I don't surf the Internet at all. Except for going to the restroom, I pay undivided attention to my work so that I can finish it on time. Then, when approaching the closing time, I hurry to leave the office on time to see my children. I always come to the office one hour earlier to make up for my tasks and leave on time (14ID4).

Chaeock compared her previous single life at work with the current company life after becoming a married woman with a child. She recalled,

When I was single, I spent more time working at the company. At that time, although a lot of work was given to me, I could enjoy having a friendly chat with my colleagues. But after becoming a working mom, as I should get off work on time, I cannot help but concentrate exclusively on my job without spending any time with my colleagues. I'm getting accustomed to this lifestyle, but sometimes I feel sad about not having the relaxing time (7ID7).

Furthermore, Bokyung shared her experiences with the difficulty of collaborative work despite her devotion to work.

I try to work very hard and pour my all energy into my work during work hours. Sometimes, I save my time to go to the restroom to take care of my task completely. To leave early for my childcare, I should continue to work without any break. However, as my job, building a ship, really requires a collaborative effort, no matter how hard I work, I can't finish my job without other colleagues' support. When the job is stuck in the middle because of others, I'm very stressed (6ID2).

At the same time, Bokyung made an effort to increase her work efficiency such as developing her professional skills and knowledge.

While very much focusing on my jobs to complete them on time, I try to develop my skills to reduce the time I spend on the same amount of work. I keep reading relevant professional books and learning English for my jobs as well (6ID7).

Image making as a working mother. Some of the participants (Bokyung, Gyungock, Kyunghee, Inyoung, and Minjung) intentionally established the image of working mother in order to be less involved with overtime, extra work, or company events such as a company dinner. In most of the cases, whereas the participants described their changed life at work after becoming a mother, they found some ways of coping with the new condition. For example, while emphasizing their identity as a mother who is responsible for childcare, they tried to leave work on time or not to leave the office very late. Also, they passively or rarely participated in company dinners. These passive attitudes were voluntary and intended choices to gain more time for childcare. Therefore, the women believed that they should endure the consequences resulting from their choices.

Kyunghee shared her experience,

After becoming a mother, I often didn't go to the company dinner. As I've not participated in it for a long time, I think my colleagues have naturally accepted my nonattendance these days. I've strongly told them, 'I can't go to the company dinner due to my children' from my early parenting period. So, my colleagues don't force me to join them. As I've been an employee for eight years, I try to tactfully cope with this problem (5ID12).

Bokyung had the similar reaction to the company dinners.

I actively joined the company dinner before giving birth to my son. However, until he became three years old, I didn't go to the company dinners at all. Some of the company dinners were compulsory, but I didn't join, saying 'I can't go because of my son.' I thought although I won't cause trouble for other colleagues regarding my work, it's my choice to participate in the company dinners. At least, I thought I should skip the company events (6ID8).

Because of the position of Kyunghee, who is an interpreter in a special position, and Bokyoung, who holds a managerial position in the department, both of these women stated that the psychological burden of not joining the company dinners was relatively less than for other newcomers. Gyungock wisely utilized the image of working mother by switching her dual identities as a mother and an employee at each domain.

I intentionally moved to the current company to enjoy better working environment for my childcare. So, I made an image as a working mom from the beginning at this company. 'Since I am a mother who looks after two very young children, I have to leave early.' With this concept, I've worked. So, my colleagues don't entrust urgent work to me, because they recognize me as a working mom. I voluntarily made such a choice for my kids (14ID1). At the same time, at home, I try to reinforce my image of working mom to my husband. 'I'm the same employee who works for a company like you [my husband].' Although I'm doing more domestic work, you [my husband] should do something corresponding to my work at home. So, he always feels sorry when he is late coming home, not taking it for granted. This is my strategy to build my identities at work and family, emphasizing the image of a mother to my colleagues and the image of an employee to my husband, respectively (14ID17).

Set lower expectations. In terms of some roles or tasks at home, many of the participants set lower expectations for their husbands and themselves. First, almost all participants, except for Ayoung and Bokyoung, had less expectations about their husbands' participation in domestic work, which was mainly influenced by traditional gender role expectations as well as an organizational culture in Korea. By abandoning expectations about their husbands to some extent, the women wanted to avoid conflict with their husbands. They believed that frequent conflict with their husbands would be a major psychological stressor to interrupt their work and life balance. Second, some participants tried to perform the minimum domestic work by lowering their expectations themselves from their traditional gender roles as a mother and a wife. This was a result of an internal negotiation with their current realities in the process of performing the multiple roles at work and home. The detailed descriptions are presented below.

Husband. Interestingly, fourteen women out of the sixteen participants did not have high expectations about their husbands. Most of the participants had complaints about their husbands' indifferent parenting roles and their passive involvement with domestic work. Despite their complaints, ironically, they believed their low expectations about their husbands is a better way to decrease their stress occurring at home. Beneath the women's reactions, there were two backgrounds. First, all these women reported that they intensively quarreled with their husbands in their newly married lives to break the value system of their husbands' traditional gender roles, including passive involvement with parenting- and domestic-related work. As time went by, however, they tried to give up their expectations about their husbands and accept them. This was because they thought their husbands' attitudes were not easily changed, and the participants wanted to be free from the torture caused by frequent quarrels with their husbands. The women thought that it was too time- and energy-consuming for them to lecture and fight with their husbands. Considering my participants' average length of marriage is 8.9 years, ranging from 5 to 16 years, their couple's life pattern would be almost set.

I don't have big complaints about my husband now because I think I've been habituated to this pattern [frequent overtime and his few family roles] for 7 years since I got married. Rather, I felt strange when he said, 'Shall we have dinner together at 6 p.m. at home?' I thought 'What happened to him? Doesn't he have any work at the company?' (5ID11).

Thus, most of the women chose to lower their expectations about their husbands and carried more domestic work and parenting roles.

Many participants vented about their thoughts of their husbands. Dajung reflected,

In my newly married life, I quarreled a lot with my husband. However, I gradually abandoned this because I felt the gap was not narrowing in spite of our frequent disputes. My husband has no ideas like 'I'll share equally domestic work and parenting role,' no matter that his wife is a career woman. He doesn't understand why he should be responsible for the roles. I think he just compares me with other stay-at-home-

moms. So, I feel very sad about that but try to give it up. Only when I have very urgent problems, I ask a favor of him by saying, ‘You know, I’m not a person who asks a favor of you, so, please do me the favor.’ Something like this (8ID10).

Ooju also said,

I almost abandoned my expectation about my husband. During the weekend, he usually takes a nap all day long and doesn’t listen to our baby’s crying. I just let him do this.... While I accept him as he is, I rather try to enjoy my roles with a positive mind. Someone must take care of the domestic work and childcare, and the person is myself. If I’m stressed by the conflict with my husband, it’s only my loss, which makes me gloomy. It’s not still easy to work gladly but I try to do that (11ID12).

The second reason for the participants’ low expectations was closely linked to the organizational culture in Korea, characterized as collectivism, frequent night overtime, and company dinners. Some of the participants thought their husbands’ organizational culture often deters them from being involved with domestic work. Although their husbands want to come back early and spend more time with their family, the organizational culture did not allow them. Consequently, Jiu said, “the image of their father in my children’s hearts is that ‘My father is a person I just see during the weekend.’ Kyunghye also added,

Basically, he is a very domestic person, but his working environment makes him not be domestic. Although he frequently worked overtime, when his time is available, he tries to be actively involved with family work (5ID8).

As it is difficult for an individual to change an organizational culture, the participants tried to understand their husbands’ circumstances to some extent and accept them.

Consequently, instead of their husbands, many women found replacements, usually their parents or parents-in-law, who can support their family roles. As the result of the low expectations about their husbands, their husbands’ impact on work-life balance was also low. Ooju shared her experience,

My satisfaction with work-life balance is very high, maybe a 95 score out of 100? The minus 5 scores is ascribed to my husband’s frequent absence for his frequent business trips. If his contributions to childcare or domestic work are high, my

satisfaction with work-life balance may be lowered to a score below 60. However, I've become accustomed to this pattern, and instead of him, I've received my mom's support a lot. Thanks to her support, I don't feel, 'his support is definitely needed by me' (13ID10).

Myself. For some participants (Ayoung, Minjung, and Nami), another strategy was to lower expectations from traditional gender roles. Specifically, they tried to be minimally involved in domestic work by reducing some jobs such as cooking, or cleaning. Although they felt the weight of 'cooking' and 'providing healthy food' based on the value of traditional gender roles, they much preferred to save energy and time by relying on takeout food services or frequently eating out. For example, while Ayoung normally concentrated on cleaning her home on only one day of the weekend, she almost always relied on outside food services every day. Particularly, she said one of the special strategies for her work-life balance is to save time by not cooking and preparing food.

Our family usually buys takeout foods such as main dishes or soups and eats them at home. We almost always eat out during the weekend. These days, my husband goes out to take out several meals. We eat various types of food in turn. So, among many domestic jobs, I don't spare much time for the area of food and save time and energy there (2ID13).

Minjung's minimum roles at home were mostly associated with her child-related work. Other than the roles, she also relied heavily on eating out and was less involved with cleaning her home.

After giving birth to my son, I didn't have that much confidence that I could work and perfectly play the role as spouse and mother at the same time. So, I'm doing just the minimum of domestic work, which is largely focused on my baby such as his laundry, meals, and so forth (16ID3). During the weekend, I also want to take a rest and enjoy the time. So, I only clean some parts of my home, partial cleaning. This would be the excuse for my laziness, 'I'm working and so tired.' Of course, I'm stressed when I look my dirty house. Nevertheless, I'm just folding the laundry being placed in front of mine. I'm just involved with the minimum roles at home. But as I don't have special break time for me, I try to find time for myself by reducing the roles (16ID11).

Positive attitudes. Many participants (Bokyung, Fangsook, Gyungock, Jiu, Kyunghee, Lami, Ooju, and Pado) tried to have and maintain positive attitudes in everyday life, which was a strategy to control and lessen their psychological distress. Their attitudes were based on the motto, “if you can’t avoid it, enjoy it.” Given the unchanged realities where they should manage their multiple roles at work and home, the participants tried to be grateful for the current realities and hold a positive mind-set. Pado explained about her stress management,

I think it’s very important to control my stress. If I try to be perfect for both jobs at work and home, my stress level will soar sharply. I don’t have to have perfect 100 scores. In order to work for a long time, I think working mothers should hold this in mind, ‘Let’s get just a score of 80!’ Then, for me, an important way to control my stress is that I try to find a solution in both areas. For example, when stressed by my work, I try to comfort myself while watching my children. Reversely, when stressed by my kids, I’m compensated through my work achievement. As I don’t have a personal time to relax, I try to control my mind that way (15ID15).

One of Jiu’s biggest motivations for work was deeply related to the gratitude for regaining a job opportunity. Because of that, she tried to be glad to work while taking care of her children.

I try to work gladly and lively at both work and home. Working gladly is the most important to me. I often face irritating and annoying problems at work and with my family. As I don’t have any supporter or backup except for me, and I take care of my two kids by myself, anyway, given my current condition, I needed to control my mind by being glad. Since I got a very precious opportunity to work again, I try to keep a positive mind, anyway (5ID19).

Kyunghee also emphasized the importance of setting her mind and attitude positively to reduce her stress.

I think everything depends on my mind. No matter if my husband does not participate in domestic work much, I try to understand it. I felt more comfortable after accepting his attitude and giving up the expectations about him. If I keep complaining about it, we will keep fighting. If I completely abandon the expectation and think ‘Okay, I’d rather do more than him,’ at least, I can reduce my psychological stress. So, by setting my mind like this, I’m wisely living together (5ID14-15).

Gyungock stated that the most important component in her current life for better work-life balance is to change her mind into a more positive way.

In the current situation in which I work and do domestic work, I don't need further support except for controlling my stress by myself. This is because my colleagues, the institution, with a flexible workplace arrangement, my mother-in-law, and anyway, my husband supports my life to some extent. However, as I'm a person who has many worries regarding my children, I think I'm creating my stress. Currently, rather than any other support, it is critical for me to try to instill a lively and positive mind. If it works, my distress would be decreased (14ID16).

One-child strategy. One of the more interesting and critical themes was a “one child strategy” for work-life balance. Among the fifteen participants with a child/children, eight women (53.3%) had only one child. All the eight women did not have any childbirth plans temporarily or permanently, because they were not confident about performing the added jobs by having more children. In reality, all of the women with two young children had many more concerns about taking care of two kids and experienced frequent physical exhaustion. Gyoungock said, “Anyway, I'm a mother with two children, 2 years old and 4 years old. As they're very young, they need much care from me and always find me, ‘Mom, mom, where are you?’ So, I'm very tired at all times” (14ID11). As childrearing is a considerable focus of a mothers' energy and time in the Korean context, many participants were afraid to have more children. Chaeock and Fangsook clearly presented the reason why they cannot help but have only one child.

Chaeock said,

As I have only one child, I can currently manage my work and family. If I have two children, I may not be able to handle everything. Maybe, my balance between work and home would be broken. So, I can't have a second one in order to maintain the current balance (7ID9).

Fangsook also explicated the reason for having just one child. Because she only has one child, she is satisfied with her work-life balance.

I don't let my husband do any domestic work or childcare, I take care of everything by myself. Instead, I gave up having a second child, which means my capacity with which I can accept everything and feel satisfied with the current reality was under the condition of one child. If I have two children, my satisfaction with work and life would definitely not be high. The situation must be a different story. Frankly, I want to have one more child, but I cannot help but have just one to maintain my work-life balance (13ID16). My husband also wants one more child, but he knows that the optimal condition so that the present balance isn't broken is to have one child (13ID17).

Hope: Expectations for a Better Future

Although all the participants had difficulties in juggling their work and life, many participants (Chaeock, Dajung, Eungyoung, Fangsook, Gyungock, Inyoung, and Pado) entertained hopes that married women's quality of life would be better in the future.

Particularly, they addressed the positive expectations in the following areas: a) national policies, b) organizational culture, and c) parenting of the younger generation. The national policies and organizational culture were deeply interrelated. Many women reported that they felt their organizational environment has slowly changed into one that is family- and women-friendly, compared to the past when they first entered the workforce. They believed that the national women policies, including maternity leave and parenting leave, had a positive influence on changing organizational culture over a long period of time. Fangsook said,

I think the current organizational atmosphere is getting better than before. I feel it has been substantially better since five years ago and much better since three years ago... Three-month maternity leave has been strictly guaranteed by law, and it's a recent trend, maybe from three years ago, to have one-year parental leave. When I delivered my son nine years ago, I just had three months for parental leave. At that time, the maximum period for parental leave was five months. Now, better environments are providing female employees with more use of the leaves (13ID4).

Some participants (Chaeock, Dajung, Eungyoung, and Herim), who work in the companies where the majority of the employees consisted of males, pointed out that the

increase of female employees contributes to a more woman-friendly environment. Eunyoung elaborated,

Recently, many female researchers who have high research achievements have been hired. When I entered this organization for the first time, male researchers made up 80% of the total employees. These days, the ratio of the female employees is maybe approximately 40% percent (12ID8). When I gave birth to my daughter 7 years ago, the organizational atmosphere in which female employees can extend their parental leave was not in place. However, with the increase of female researchers, the organizational culture has naturally been changed so that the women usually take one-year parental leave or extend it more. At the early state, this climate was a little bit strange, but these days, this atmosphere has been generalized (12ID9).

Likewise, Dajung felt that the organizational culture such as the company dinner or business drinking culture has dwindled because of the increased number of female employees, and is becoming more women-friendly.

I think that the increase of female employees in my company has created a new organizational atmosphere for the company dinner, changing it into a company lunch as suggested by married women with children. When we have a company lunch, we can use a flexible Smart Lunch, which is a flexible lunch using two hours instead of leaving late one hour for the day. For the company dinner, my company has carried on a campaign to finish it early, before 9 p.m. Thanks to these organizational changes, the business drinking culture has also been reduced considerably (8ID9).

Pado emphasized the institutional support for female married employees for a better future.

If I believe our society has gradually been changed, I feel more relieved. At least, the present is better than the past. Institutionally, compared to the past when we had the six-day workweek several years ago, since the introduction of the five-day workweek, people have more time for leisure. If the institutions for married women employees lead people first, I believe people's minds might be slowly changed (15ID13).

The last area was related to the expectations for the parenting attitudes of the younger generation. As seen previously, almost all participants had complaints of their husbands' passive attitudes toward parenting and domestic work influenced by their values of traditional gender roles. In spite of their negative expectations about their husbands, Dajung and Lami, in their 40s, had great expectations for the new culture of parenting by the younger

generation. While witnessing their male juniors' different parenting attitudes, they believed that fathers in the new generation would more actively participate in equal parenting roles than those in their generation. Dajung shared an experience,

As my husband is a traditional Korean man, he rarely does domestic work or childcare. However, while looking and talking with some male juniors in my company, I feel the generation gap between my husband and them even though their ages are just around ten years apart. For example, the juniors start work one or two hours late after taking their kids to the hospital when their children are sick. When I have the same case, it's always me who takes my kids to the hospital. I can't imagine the opposite case. While watching them, I feel, 'the generations are gradually changing.' I'm envious of them in a sense (8ID10).

Lami's feelings were similar to Dajung's,

After accepting my husband's conservative and traditional style, I don't quarrel with him any longer regarding his passive involvement at home. I think it's unfair, but as I've been unconsciously educated by the value of traditional gender roles since I was young, I think I'm accepting this unfair reality. This naturally became our fixed pattern while living together for 16 years. However, while I talk with new male employees in their early thirties in my company, when they say 'I'm busy doing this and that [domestic work and childcare] at home,' I was very surprised. I feel the young generation's marriage life is totally different from mine. Oh, my- why isn't this luck given to me? Hahaha (9ID14).

It was a good sign for some women to expect a better future for married female employees' quality of life at work and home.

Women's Experiences with Flexible Workplace Arrangements

In this section, I will report findings related to women's experiences with flexible workplace arrangements. The findings were obtained based on the second and the third questions: "What are the experiences of the highly educated and married Korean female employees with flexible workplace arrangements?" and "How do flexible workplace arrangements impact the work-life balance of the highly educated and married Korean female employees?" In the process of the analysis, I found that the findings about the two research questions were closely interrelated, thus being presented from an integrative perspective.

In this study, the 16 women participants reported quite mixed experiences with FWA. The type of experiences women had was largely influenced by the work environment or culture they were in. Together, they acted as a double-edged sword creating both positive experiences and challenges. Further, the match between their personal needs and the job requirements would easily create a conflict, thus leading to unsatisfying FWA experiences. In my study, three women opted to abandon the FWA they had due to such challenges.

Table 5.

Superordinate Themes and Their Subthemes: Women's Experiences with FWA

| Superordinate Themes | Subthemes |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 1. Positive Experiences | 1.1. Childcare 1.2. Less stress 1.3. Job satisfaction 1.4. Autonomy to control work schedules 1.5. Career continuity |
| 2. Challenges | 2.1. Different challenges by types of FWA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Staggered work hours ○ Reduced work hours ○ Telecommuting ○ Full time part timer 2.2. Organizational culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Organizational types ○ Traditional culture ○ Gendered culture 2.3. Job characteristics 2.4. Limited FWA options |

Based on the analysis, two superordinate themes and nine subthemes were observed. The superordinate themes were focused on positive and negative experiences with the women's flexible workplace arrangements, respectively. The first superordinate theme, *positive experience*, was explicated in five categories: a) childcare, b) less stress, c) job satisfaction, d) autonomy to control work schedules, and e) career continuity. The second superordinate theme, *challenges*, had four categories: a) different challenges by types of FWA, b) organizational culture, c) job characteristics, and d) limited FWA options. Table 5 presents detailed information of the superordinate themes and the subthemes.

Positive Experiences

The first superordinate theme identified by my participants was associated with their positive experiences with FWA. Almost all participants except for three women (Bokyung, Fangsook, and Nami) were very satisfied with the use of FWA, and they revealed their intention of continuing to use the practice. Their positive experiences were discussed in five categories: childcare, less stress at work and home, autonomy to control work schedules, and career continuity.

Childcare. Regardless of the types of FWA the participants utilized, all women except for Lami mostly used their FWA for children-related issues (e.g. children's medical appointment, drop off and pick up from the daycare or school, occasional events at the daycare or school, and spending more time with their child/children, etc.). As almost all the participants played the role of primary caregiver, the biggest interest in work flexibility was related to their children. Therefore, the benefit of childcare was recognized as the most powerful one in spite of the women's different contexts. Furthermore, many women connected the usefulness of childcare with their satisfaction with work-life balance. "The

best advantage of flexible working time is that I can balance my work and family to some extent” (Minjung, 16ID9).

Some women such as Chaeock, Dajung, Jiu, and Kyunghee reported that they are highly satisfied with the availability that allows them to take care of their children by themselves without asking others for help. Dajung, who has utilized a staggered work hours arrangement (called Smart Working in her company), said,

The best advantage of Smart Working is that I can take care of my children-related events by myself, not having to ask others. If the flexible working time did not exist in my company, I would have to ask my mother to look after my kids when my children are suddenly sick or have emergency problems. I don’t like to ask others to do my jobs, no matter if the person is my mom. Because of that, the best benefit is that I can handle my children’s issues on my own by adjusting my schedule (8ID7).

Kyunghee (reduced work hours) shared her experience.

I can do my children’s drop off and pick up without others lending a hand. This is the best benefit for the reduced work hours. Since my parents and parents-in-law don’t live nearby and my husband is always busy... I’m the primary caregiver, I couldn’t help but take the responsibility alone. For this reason, I started utilizing this arrangement (5ID3).

Both Eunyoung and Gyungock were employing the staggered work hour arrangement to spend more time with their child/children in the evening. They believed that it is better to secure evening hours for their children, considering their daily pattern.

As I didn’t have a time to drop off my daughter at kindergarten in the morning, I tried to go to work early and spend more time with my daughter in the evening after work (Eunyoung, 12ID7).

When deciding to use this arrangement, instead of giving up the morning, I thought ‘Let’s secure the evening hours for my kids, feeding them meals and putting them to bed.’ Because as soon as they get up they’ll also go to the daycare, I chose the evening for intensive childcare (Gyungock, 14ID2).

On one hand, Pado, who has telecommuted for more than 5 years, confessed that her telecommuting naturally became a critical part of her family life.

Now, it's taken for granted by me that the flexible workplace arrangement is guaranteed. I will never work for a company in the future that does not provide telecommuting. I can't work only at the office any longer because I should look after my children. While telecommuting for a long time, my kids have expected me to stay at home to some extent, and the fact that I can stay with them also makes me relieved and comfortable (15ID11).

In sum, while most of the participants were usefully employing their FWA, especially in looking after their child/children, they felt their FWA was helpful for a better work-life balance in that it particularly supports their roles as mother to some extent.

Less stress. Many women (Chaeock, Dajung, Eunyoung, Inyoung, Jiu, Minjung, Ooju, and Pado) reported that they felt less physical and psychological stress after starting FWA. As they could choose their work schedules as occasion demands (e.g. family-related, medical, commuting issues, etc.), or spaces in the case of telecommuting, they felt more relaxed out of the traditional work schedules and spatial restraints. Inyoung (staggered work hours) shared her relaxed present commuting time by comparing it to her previous life.

Since my company adopted the flexible working hours, my organizational atmosphere has become flexible. I also feel my morning time was more relaxed than before. The previous work schedule was 8 to 5. Many colleagues' mornings, including mine, were hectic to be able to arrive at the company by 8 a.m. Right before 8 a.m., many people rushed to the entrance of the company to punch their electronic time cards, or used half a day off when they had personal business. However, these days, we can simply adjust our schedules through the online system, as long as we fulfill 40 hours work per week with a minimum of 4 hours of work a day. If I was late to work for some reason in the morning, I just think that 'Okay, let's start work late a little bit and go home late.' Thanks to this institution, my psychological pressure was relieved (10ID6).

Pado stated telecommuting diminished her physical and psychological stress by saving commuting time and energy.

In addition to the advantage of childcare, telecommuting was very useful to prevent my physical exhaustion by saving commuting time. For me, if my physical condition isn't good, it easily affects my emotions and feelings. Telecommuting helps me relieve the physical stress to some extent (15ID7).

Ooju talked about her relaxed life according to her telecommuting.

I'm telecommuting twice a week and go to work at the office for the rest of the days. On the days when I'm telecommuting, if my feeling is not good, or I don't work at home, I sometimes go to a coffee shop and work there. At that time, I feel very happy and glorious 'Oh, I can earn money as well as enjoy my free time at this café.' I really like telecommuting, which relieves my life. So, all of my friends envy me. (11ID6).

Eunyoung also recounted her decreased distress with work and family.

As long as I'm allowed to work the staggered work hours, I'd like to keep using it. While using this practice, I felt my physical strain and fatigue was lessened, because maybe I could avoid the rush hour. Additionally, if I want, I can leave at 5 p.m. to pick up my daughter. Before using this arrangement, my original work schedule was 9 to 6, and I usually got off work around at 7 or 7:30 p.m. At that time, my evening after going home was very busy with bathing my daughter and getting her to sleep. Because I normally arrived at home after 8 or 8:30 p.m., my evening was very short. Now, as I can leave at least one hour earlier than in the past, my psychological pressure on taking care of her in the evening was diminished, which consequently lessened my general distress (12ID14-15).

Job satisfaction. The provision of FWA contributed to increasing some participants' (Gyungock, Minjung, Nami, Ooju, and Pado) job satisfaction. The women were grateful that the opportunity to utilize FWA was given to them so that they could use it when they needed. Furthermore, the supportive organizational environment had a positive impact on increasing the women's commitment to their jobs and companies, and ultimately contributing to their better work-life balance. Ooju was one of the participants who was fully satisfied with her telecommuting. She said,

I really like telecommuting, which enriches my life. The opportunity for telecommuting considerably affects my high job satisfaction. I'm very happy that I was able to get the organizational support of telecommuting itself. While telecommuting I can earn money as well as care for my daughter. As I can manage both work and family in virtue of telecommuting, I think I can buy something good for my daughter while maintaining my job. So, my job satisfaction is high (11ID11).

Nami, who was utilizing telecommuting at a foreign financial appraisal company, stated,

Although I didn't use telecommuting for a long time caused by several reasons, when I had a childcare problem and my supervisor offered me telecommuting first, I was

very impressed. Actually, my psychological pressure that I should overcome everything alone was high at that time. However, the offer was given to me, I felt my company is a place that understands my situation and considers me a lot. So, my loyalty to the company was increased (11D15).

Gyungock, who was using a staggered work hours, said,

Compared to my previous company, while utilizing staggered work hours, my satisfaction at work and with my family was increased because I can predict the time to some extent when my work will be finished and I can go back home. Basically, if one's work hours to start and end work are punctually observed, it doesn't matter to make my work and family-related jobs work. However, when I worked in my previous company my closing time at work was always irregular and it wasn't guaranteed when I could leave the office. So, I finally moved to the present company with more work flexibility (14D2).

Autonomy to control work schedules. Dajung, Fangsook, Gyungock, and Jiu expressed an advantage of FWA related to increased satisfaction with personal control over schedules and work environments. They were happy with the working environment in which they could determine their own schedule when needed. "The best benefit of the flexible work arrangement I felt was I could take care of my personal business by controlling my work hours" (8D7) Moreover, as these women experienced both traditional work hours and flexible working hours at the companies, they particularly felt pleasure in that they could choose their own work schedules, not just work within the standardized work hours.

Gyungock shared,

An important reason I'm actively using the staggered work hours is that the control tower about work hours is myself. Compared to my previous company, I can adjust my schedules and use the hours I choose regarding the time for my work and the time for my family. I couldn't do this in my previous company. The possibility that enables me to work and manage my family-related events according to the schedules I choose makes me happy (14D14).

Fangsook explained,

I felt a feeling of pleasure that I could choose something other than the traditional company rules, while working more than ten years at this company. A kind of psychological satisfaction in the process of choosing my work schedule? If I had been

controlled by the standardized work hours provided by the company in the past, while using the staggered work hour, I felt a sense of satisfaction with choosing another option and utilizing it for my personal business (13ID14).

Career continuity. For some women such as Kyunghee, Lami, and Pado, the FWA functioned as a retention and/or talent management strategy. They appreciated that the opportunity of FWA was given to them when they had personal difficulties so that they could continue to work without giving up their jobs. As introduced previously, Kyunghee had a problem with work hours conflicting with the time for her children's pickup from a new daycare center. Due to the transference of the head office of her company to a local city, her children, who were attending the corporate daycare center, could not use it any longer and she needed to find another daycare. The new daycare center closed earlier than the previous one, and she had to pick them up earlier. At that time, Kyunghee was offered reduced work hours, working from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., by her company. She reflected that this opportunity to use this practice prevented her from quitting her job.

The impact of reduced work hours on my work-life balance is very high. If this arrangement was not allowed, I may have to take a year off or seriously quit my job. As I didn't have any person who could support me nearby and it was not easy to find an appropriate babysitter, I could fortunately work without abandoning my job by virtue of this arrangement. I think flexible workplace arrangements are very effective means for childcare (5ID6).

When Lami was asked about the impact of FWA on her work-life balance, she positively reflected her experience with the reduced work hours she utilized. Lami was the only participant without a child despite her 16 years of marriage. In order to prepare for having a child, including a medical treatment for artificial insemination, she volunteered to use the reduced work hours provided by her company at that time.

My experience with reduced work hours is very positive. When I had a difficulty with becoming pregnant, I could fully use my time by using the arrangement. If not, I might have had to submit my resignation to go to the medical center. As the

institution of reduced work hours was timely offered to me in my condition, I was very satisfied (9ID11).

For Pado's case, telecommuting was utilized as an organizational strategy for talent management in her field, a foreign-based control research organization. As most employees in her field consisted of pharmacists, nurses, or biologists, this field was very gender-specific and specialized, mostly comprised of women. Pado said that telecommuting is a very common working arrangement in the field, and it is often used to attract and retain experienced female employees with children. She said,

Many companies in my field prefer to recruit experienced employees. Because of that, most of them of that age are mothers with children (15ID5). In my department, there are many working mothers. If telecommuting is not allowed, it'll be very difficult for the company to hire them because the women prefer to not work at a company that doesn't offer telecommuting (15ID4). For me, my job is very demanding but I think I could work for a long time due to the work flexibility provided by my company (15ID10).

Challenges

In addition to the positive experiences with FWA, my participants experienced several challenges and concerns in different contexts: organizational, personal, and cultural. The challenges they faced were discussed in four major issues: a) different challenges by types of FWA, b) organizational culture, c) job characteristics, and d) limited FWA options.

Different challenges by types of FWA. Many participants addressed different challenges according to their different FWA. The difficulties were mainly attributed to the participants' different personal needs and life patterns, or the dilemmas caused by the characteristics of each FWA.

Staggered work hours. Some participants (Chaeock, Fangsook, and Gyungock) using staggered work hours shared experiences that were bogged down in looking after their child/children due to the changed daily schedules. Depending on the women's preference,

they could choose the starting or ending hours of the day, which meant if the participants start work late they went home late, and vice versa. Specifically, when they chose the option to start work early, they abandoned morning hours spent taking care of their child/children, instead gaining more time in the evening to spend with their children. Likewise, if they started work late, they could spend more relaxed morning time with their children but could not fully have evening hours to spend with their children. In addition to the nature of the staggered work hours arrangement with an emphasis on the individuals' choices for work schedule, the choices were dependent on the participants' or their children's life patterns or occasional needs, which were very contingency-based.

Gyungock recounted her ambivalent feelings resulting from the nature of "choice and concentration" embedded in staggered work hours.

Given my 24 hours, when I think 'how to distribute my time effectively except for sleeping time,' it was morning hours that I gave up. So, instead of starting work early, I decided to secure the evening hours completely for my daughters, such as making dinner and putting them to bed. Anyway, the reason why I abandoned morning hours was that my children go to the daycare soon after they get up (14ID2). As I leave very early in the morning, I can't see my girls in the morning. These days, my second one wakes up early and cries. Anyway, as I should leave, I feel very sad when I look at her. Then, I wonder if it's right for me to start work early or not. At the same time, I think 'Oh-no. If I start work late my evening hours would be delayed.' I have an ambivalent feeling in using this arrangement (14ID9).

Chaeock also stated,

Actually, I'd like to use my flexible workplace arrangement frequently even when I don't have urgent events. However, the reason I don't use it everyday is that if I start work one hour late I should leave one hour late. In this case, while my entire daily schedule is gotten behind a little bit, it was difficult to take care of my child and do housework after getting home, such as being available at suppertime to give my son his dinner. So, I thought it's better for me to use the flexible workplace arrangement only when especially needed, because I prefer to look after him more in the evening and rather than spend relaxed morning hours with him. For this reason, although I can utilize the FWA as much as I want, I try not to overuse it (7ID4).

On one hand, Fangsook's different personal needs finally made her quit the staggered work hours. Although she used it for the purpose of better childcare, it was hard for her to narrow the gap between the previous life pattern and the changed one after the use of FWA, and she went back to her previous life style.

When he entered elementary school last year, I thought I needed to care for him more after coming home early. While using this for a few months, however, I realized the changed life pattern didn't fit well with my life schedule. Before using it, I effectively utilized morning hours for my son, reading with him and checking his homework from 6:50 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. Then, I prepared to leave for my office around 8 a.m. and arrived there by 9 a.m. However, after the use of FWA, I couldn't spend morning hours with him any longer. As he also should leave for school by 9 a.m., I thought it is better for him to have the same pattern with me, so we went back to the previous schedule. Currently, we're employing morning hours like before (13ID6-7). Additionally, if I start work late, my closing hour becomes 7 or 8 p.m. I didn't want to be late in the evening. If the life schedule fit with me, I may continue to use it but it didn't in reality. My original purpose for the use of FWA was for childcare and the reason for stopping it was also for my child. I felt a gap between the reality and the implementation of a flexible workplace arrangement (13ID18).

Reduced work hours. The major issue identified by the users of reduced work hours was an inverse relationship between the participants' reduction in salaries resulting from the reduced work hours and the same amount of workload. In short, "do the same with less," meaning the same amount of work but less time and money, was a leading concern from the participants, including Kyunghee and Lami. Kyunghee said,

The biggest difference before and after using the reduced work hours would be economic damage to our family incomes because my salary was reduced in accordance with my work hours. Except for this, nothing was changed, I still had the same workload (5ID7).

Lami seriously criticized this problem. While she was utilizing this arrangement with 30% reduced work hours for 1.5 years, her colleagues took care of Lami's workload corresponding to the 30% work hours without any compensation or backup forces from the company. Although Lami was not directly damaged, she thought this system—the same

amount of work with less money given to employees using the reduced work hours, and her company did not prepare for any backup system for her reduced work hours—was very unfair.

I was very sorry about my colleagues. I just want to express that my company is selfish. When the company offered this policy first, it should've prepared for a backup system for the reduced hours. They had no idea about that. Koreans have a strong sense of responsibility. They accomplish their given tasks anyway. The headquarters knew very well about this disposition of Koreans. My colleagues did the extra work for me without any compensation. By doing so, anyway, my company saved money. It's not fair (9ID6). Another colleague, who utilized 50% reduced work hours, would have the same complaint because she must also take care of 100% of her tasks despite 50% work hours. She finally quit her job and moved to another company (9ID13).

Telecommuting. Some telecommuters, including Nami and Ooju, pointed out an unclear delimitation between work and home. Ooju was very happy with several benefits of telecommuting, but at the same time the difficulty with compartmentalizing work and home sometimes made her physically tired. "I often complete the rest of my work at night after putting our daughter to bed. From time to time, I felt like I was working 24/7" (11ID6). Pado, who has worked completely at home for 5 years, also said,

While working as a full-telecommuter for the last five years, it was good for my children but I felt lost my femininity and professionalism in a sense. Since I just worked at home without going outside, I sometimes didn't need to wash my face and wear good clothes. My workplace and personal life were not separated, so, I recently moved to another company where I can combine telecommuting and office work (15ID2).

On one hand, Nami was telecommuting every Friday from her mother's home so she could take care of her four-month-old baby. As Nami's mother has raised her daughter at her home in a local city, Nami went to see her baby every weekend. Although Nami started telecommuting at her supervisor's suggestion, while telecommuting, she found herself doing more overtime than working at the office. This was because she did not want her boss or

colleagues to think ‘You’re not devoted to your job at home.’ Because of her concern and the difficulty of establishing a boundary between work and family, she could not completely concentrate on her job as well as childcare. Consequently, Nami voluntarily quit her telecommuting a few months later due to the following.

It was very hard to work and care for my baby simultaneously at home because I needed to give real-time responses to my clients or colleagues. So, I was concerned that my boss and colleagues would view me as a slacker while telecommuting. Just in case, to avoid complaints from them, I worked overtime a lot. If I worked at the office I could get off work on time, but couldn’t do it while telecommuting. It was very challenging for me to find a limit between work and home. If my baby wasn’t too young, or if I was at a manager level, the efficiency for telecommuting might be better while checking the jobs with a smart phone. However, for my condition, it was not efficient. So, I voluntarily stopped telecommuting after three months (I1D12).

Full time part time hours. Jiu, who is the only user of full time part time hours, also called “Happy Employee,” had a feeling of uneasiness with her position. Although Jiu felt satisfied with her work-life balance by using this arrangement, she had revolving concerns about unclear operation policies for happy employees. Repeatedly, the position of the happy employee was initiated by the central government as a national policy to create a decent job for career-interrupted women’s reemployment while supporting their work-life balance. As this flexible workplace arrangement was newly created and operated for the first time in only a few large companies such as Jiu’s, clear personnel management policies for happy employees were not yet established. Because of that, both the full time part timers and the company experienced confusion, and the second round to recruit happy employees has not been achieved yet.

My company just hired happy employees without well-established operation systems, following a governmental push to recruit them. Whenever HR staff in my company were changed, they delivered different information about our treatment, such as promotions, evaluations, and so forth, which made us very confused. One day, an executive director held a meeting with happy employees, and he admitted that our company never ran the institution of happy employee, so we needed more time to

settle into this system (4ID8). I think this institution is in a period of transition. Recalling my experience, I think it would be very difficult for this institution to be expanded more. I feel negative aspects from several parties, the company and even the happy employees themselves. So, I feel uneasy because my status is not stable (4ID17).

Organizational culture. An important concern identified by many participants in using their FWA was associated with organizational culture. Specifically, the FWA practices were largely influenced by the characteristics of organizational types, traditional organizational culture, and the prejudice of gender roles in Korea. The following subsections discuss the three aspects of organizational culture related to the participants' experiences with FWA.

Organizational types. The types of organizations (e.g. private, public, and foreign) my participants have/had worked with affected the women's diverse experiences with FWA. This mostly originated from the unique organizational culture caused by the characteristics of each organizational type. However, regardless of the organizational types, the more women-friendly the organizational culture or more workplace flexibility guaranteed in the organizations, the more positive experiences the women had with FWA.

First, for the nine women who worked for private companies, the organizations' cultural characteristics considerably varied depending on the CEO's vision or the gender composition of the organization. For example, as Bokyoung worked for a strongly male-centered shipbuilding company where there was little interest in female employees' welfare, it was hard for Bokyoung to suggest improvements for FWA or raise the issue freely. "Given the organizational environment in which there are few women, few working moms, and I'm the only married woman with a child in my department," (6ID5) the organizational culture was disadvantageous to her use of FWA and work-life balance. On the other hand, Bokyoung

and Chaeock's company was one of few private companies with the vision of valuing employee's quality of life in Korea, and accordingly, a well-established FWA practice. Combined with the CEO's vision and the recent changed gender composition with an increased number of female employees, their company has fully supported their professional and family life. Chaeock stated,

My company allows more workplace flexibility to some extent than other companies. If I faithfully perform my tasks, my company tries to give some consideration to our work-life balance. As my organization is a cosmetics company and there are many female employees, flexible workplace arrangements are appropriately offered. Then, as I'm working in the organizational culture where we don't get stressed a lot because we leave the office at the regular time, my happy life at work only depends on me (7ID5). For Smart Working, the company advertised a lot first and encouraged us to utilize it. Maybe, two years ago, as I remember, the HR department generally managed and oversaw how much the flexible workplace arrangements were used in each team. Also, the evaluation for the use of Smart Working was somewhat reflected in the year-end corporate performance report. I think this system has been more established, compared to past years (7ID3).

Second, the three women (Eungyoung, Gyungock, and Kyunghee), who work for public organizations, commonly recognized that their companies provide numerous welfare systems and policies for female employees and tried to observe them to some extent, compared to private companies. Because their organizations should "set a good example to carry out the national policies and advertise them to other companies" (Kyunghee, 5ID3), as the women believed, at the very least, they tried to make a minimum effort to follow the policies. For this reason, their job satisfaction was high. Gyungock recounted,

As my company is an organization under the Ministry of Health and Welfare, our welfare systems or policies are considerably influenced by the governmental agency's systems and rules (14ID2). One good thing about working at a public organization is that when some national policies for working moms are created, my organization should compulsorily implement them, or at least pretend to perform them. So, if the policies are established, someone, even one person, uses them no matter how uncomfortable the person feels in using them. As my company has a working environment where it gives opportunities to female employees, it's good. It's not easy

for even large companies to carry out such policies because its embedded organizational culture cannot be easily changed (14ID7).

Last, almost all women (Nami, Lami, and Pado) who worked at foreign companies commonly pointed out that the biggest advantage of their companies is a guarantee of workplace flexibility unlike many Korean corporations. In virtue of the established organizational culture, they were able to utilize their FWA “without walking on eggshells.”

Nami said,

I think my company is better for married female employees than other Korean companies because workplace flexibility is naturally embedded in the organizational culture. Employees can use his or her vacations freely without walking on eggshells. My company also provided several flexible workplace arrangements, such as telecommuting, summer hours, and so on. I used the telecommuting for a few months. I like the organizational atmosphere itself where these practices are naturally accepted. As my company is a global corporation, I’ve seen many cases of people who use various flexible workplace arrangements. So, I could freely use it (11D8).

Traditional culture. A critical cultural barrier for many participants to utilize FWA was influenced by the traditional corporate culture in Korea. Although many women usefully employed their FWA, they still felt uncomfortable utilizing the right given to them by their FWA to leave the office on time. As previously presented, the Korean corporate culture is often characterized as strongly collectivistic, with long working hours, frequent night overtime, and walking on eggshells around their supervisors. In this organizational atmosphere, some participants did not want to “stand out” among their colleagues in that they are one of the few people who use FWA in their departments. In addition to the use of FWA, many women did not actively participate in company dinners or other company events due to childcare. For this reason, they already had a feeling of being out of the loop. In this context, they believed their usage of FWA might be seen more as a different pattern from other colleagues at work. For this reason, some participants such as Eunyoung and Gyungock tried

to voluntarily work overtime at least one or two hours as long as they could stay at the office in accordance with the Korean organizational culture.

Chaeock said,

Anyway, people may think that those who use FWA or leave the office on time won't be as dedicated to their work as colleagues who don't use FWA or work late into the night. Because of that, I've seen many cases where they intentionally didn't use FWA. Depending on the company and organizational culture, the atmosphere for using FWA would be different (7ID3).

Gyungock recalled her experiences,

In my department, only two persons, including me, are utilizing the staggered work hours. As this resource is surely very useful I'm using it. However, I am always careful about talking to my supervisor and getting his approval to use it, even though my boss is not the person who doesn't allow me to use it. Anyway, since I'm doing something different from others at my workplace it makes me feel very uncomfortable. I'm not completely free from the atmosphere in using it (14ID14). So, while walking on eggshells, I really work hard without down time during work hours. Also, although my regular work schedule, with the application to the staggered work hours, is from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. I mostly work overtime at least one hour more until 6 p.m.

I really want to work only 8 hours a day and finish work on time, but it's my greed. No one works like that. As I don't want to stand out among others, I can't leave the office at 5 p.m. When they're working, if I leave at 5 p.m., it seems I will stand out. As I'm a member in this organization, I should bear this situation while using the staggered work hours (14ID12).

Gendered culture. An important finding about my participants' experiences with FWA is associated with traditional gender role expectations. Almost all participants were strongly influenced by social and family expectations about traditional roles of mother, and therefore, were serving as primary caregivers for their child/children. This traditional recognition was also reflected in the different frequency of use of FWA by gender. In the cases where FWA existed in the companies of participants' husbands, few husbands except for Ayoung's actively utilized FWA. Although four of my participants' (Bokyung, Dajung, Fangsook, and Inyoung) husbands worked for the same companies as their wives, they rarely

employed FWA. Considering the main reason for most of the participants using FWA was related to their child-related issues (e.g. childcare, medical issues, parent meetings, etc.), their husbands were free from taking childcare roles, and thereby seldom utilized FWA, especially in regard to childcare.

Dajung said,

[Although we worked at the same company] my husband rarely uses the Smart Working. He works late into night and enjoys going to company dinners while hanging out with his colleagues there. Then, for some of the male colleagues in my department, they use the staggered work hours for their self-development such as going to a private English institute to learn English (8ID7).

Chaeock stated,

As I'm playing a leading role in looking after my son, my husband is concentrating on his job without a big concern about childcare. So, I feel doubly exhausted. When my kid is sick and should see a doctor, I try to delay the start of my work by using staggered work hours. However, my husband never considers the possibility for him to use a flexible workplace arrangement. He doesn't even know about the existence of flexible workplace arrangements in his company. He takes the role for granted as if it is my job (7ID2).

Additionally, Bokyung's company allowed only female employees with a child under 9 years old to use staggered work hours. Bokyung's husband was a very supportive man with an equal parenting partnership but the company rules prevented him from using the staggered work hours. This shows an aspect of social prejudice embedded in the organizational culture.

Job characteristics. Depending on my participants' positions and departments, the possibility for them to utilize FWA was different. Their positions or departments were largely influenced by their job characteristics. Many participants (Ayoung, Eunyoung, Fangsook, Herim, Jiu, Kyunghee, and Ooju) reported that their unique positions--a researcher, an interpreter, a happy employee, or an international business coordinator--in their departments or companies enabled them to be the recipients of FWA. In other words, it

meant that the same opportunity for FWA was not given to other colleagues in the participants' departments or companies. Accordingly, the women considered their circumstances to be very lucky. Ayoung, who serves as a researcher at a scientific instrument company, stated,

My company provides staggered work hours for only people in the research department so that they can choose a starting time for work, either 9 a.m. or 10 a.m. I think my company considered the job characteristics of research work such as irregular working time for doing experiments (11D8).

Kyunghee, who is an interpreter in a public enterprise, said,

Everything was possible because of my special position of interpreter (51D6). I'm only doing interpreting and translating jobs, never dealing with any administrative work. I'm the only interpreter in my company, Seoul, and because of the uniqueness of my job I don't have special bosses who discuss my jobs. As my position is very different from other colleagues in my department, it's possible for me to use the reduced work hours (51D1). I've seen some colleagues who use staggered work hours, but I'm the only person who is employing the reduced work hours in my company as far as I know (51D3).

Jiu, who is a happy employee in a distribution company, recounted,

My team is in charge of job training for staff in retail restores. I'm the only happy employee on my team. As I started work with the position of happy employee, my regular work hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Other [full time] colleagues [working 40 hours a week] on my team and in my department fully know about my position. 'Oh, she is a happy employee' Fortunately, my manager often checks to see if my workload is heavy or not and communicates with me well (41D7).

Ooju, who is an international business coordinator, stated,

Telecommuting is possible because I take care of most of my job online (111D2). Also, as I'm working with clients at foreign companies, I often work at night in consideration of the time difference. Because of my unique job characteristics, I'm the only telecommuter in my company (111D9).

Although their unique positions and job characteristics gave the participants the opportunities to utilize FWA, Eunyoung's position temporarily prevented her from using her

staggered work hours. Eunyong recalled that when she held an executive position last year, the usage of FWA was temporarily restricted during her incumbency.

In my company, if someone is appointed to an executive position, the person cannot use staggered work hours. Last year, I served as the director of the analysis center in my organization. So, I couldn't employ staggered work hours during that time and started to use it again this year (12ID10).

Limited FWA options. One of the important issues raised by many participants was few FWA options, including the limited FWA types and work schedules, offered by their organizations. Almost all private companies, except for Chaeock and Dajung's cases, provided only one type of FWA, staggered work hours. Furthermore, the work schedules the users of this type could choose were also very restrained. For example, Ayoung and Herim's company allowed employees to choose only one further choice for flexible work schedule, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Bokyung's company provided staggered work hours with limited employees and work schedules, only married female employees with a child under 9 years old and 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., respectively. Fangsook's case was the same; people were allowed to choose the only work schedule from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. if necessary.

On one hand, all the public organizations my participants have worked for provided two types of FWA, staggered work hours and reduced work hours, but few employees utilized reduced work hours. My participants' foreign companies tended to have more various FWA types such as telecommuting, summer hours, and reduced work hours than Korean corporations. Particularly, telecommuting was almost exclusive to the foreign companies. Despite a variety of FWA options in foreign companies, at Lami's company, the reduced work hours Lami utilized was not a rooted flexible work arrangement but was temporarily offered. Recently, if needed, people could use it with conditions advantageous to the company. Overall, many women felt the lack of FWA options and wished to get more

diversified FWA types (e.g. reduced work hours and job sharing) and choices for work schedules.

Ayoung, using staggered work hours at a private company, said,

We can choose our starting work time as only either 9 a.m. or 10 a.m. and we're not allowed to choose 7 or 8 a.m. If people can start work earlier and finish earlier, they would make better use of their time for the rest of the day. I don't know why my company gives us a very limited option. I wish the flexible workplace arrangements could be really flexible in reality (2ID8). Actually, I raised this issue regarding the limited schedule choices, but an HR staff member said 'Our company doesn't have any plans to expand them yet.' Actually, my company atmosphere is not very strict toward employees and various welfare benefits are provided. Because of that, my company doesn't think about developing the staggered work hours any longer (2ID9).

Lami, who utilized reduced work hours at a foreign company, stated,

Surely, I'm interested in using the reduced work hours later. However, as this is not a clearly established system in my company yet, if I want to use it now, it may be disadvantageous to me when I return to work. So, I don't use it now (9ID11). Actually, the most preferred type of flexible workplace arrangement is job sharing. I heard that working mothers at the local office in the Netherlands usually utilize job sharing. This is where two or more employees share one full-time job, if a person works from Monday to Wednesday and another person works from Wednesday to Friday. The overlapping Wednesday is a backup day for them. As the Netherlands government supports the arrangement, it would be possible, but it's not possible yet in Korea. Anyway, I think job sharing is very attractive to me. It's my hope (9ID9).

An interesting finding was that all the three participants (Bokyung, Fangsook, and Nami) who voluntarily quit their FWA wanted their companies to provide a reduced work schedule arrangement. They believed that the reduced work schedule arrangement would be more effective and useful for their childcare rather than a modest FWA like the staggered work hours.

Fangsook, who quit her staggered work hours at a private company, stated,

The flexible workplace arrangement provided by my company is only staggered work hours. Moreover, the work schedule that we can choose is also very limited, only 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. I heard that people in the headquarters of my company frequently work 7 to 4. Anyway, at best, we can just adjust our schedule within one hour out of the regular schedule. Other flexible work arrangements such as telecommuting are not

provided. I don't think my company will expand the types of FWA more. Actually, as I'm a working mom, I wish I could use a work schedule of 4 days a week. No matter how my income is reduced, if this type of flexible work arrangement is given to me, I will definitely use it. If I can take off one day a weekday, it would be more helpful to take care of my kid. I can go to a parent-teacher conference without any pressure, and like that. As the weekend life is very different from the weekday life, I'd like to enjoy the life that I can do only during the weekday through other types of FWA (13ID19-20).

Bokyoung, who quit her staggered work hours at a private company, said,

When a female employee in my company was about to resign due to childcare problems, some executives held a round-table conference for female employees. At that time, we [female employees] suggested with one voice a reduced work hour during the critical parenting period. We said, as our workloads are very heavy during the early parenting period, if we can temporarily transfer to another position with less of a workload or utilize reduced work hours, working from 10 to 5, for just several years, it would be very good. If the reduced work hours is created, we could feel more relaxed with childcare and the workload. Normally, as the working mothers in my company are experienced employees in positions above assistant managers, I believe they can fully perform their work after returning to their original positions. We don't want the modest staggered work hours but a more practical flexible workplace arrangement like the reduced work hours. As the result of the meeting, one more corporate daycare center was built but the idea for reduced work hours was ignored (6ID6).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I presented the sixteen highly educated and married female Korean employees' lived experiences with work-life balance and flexible workplace arrangements. Although they had different backgrounds in several areas, they shared some common experiences regarding their WLB and FWA experiences. In terms of the women's experiences with WLB, six superordinate themes were drawn: 1) the meaning of "work-life balance," 2) support systems, 3) career aspirations, 4) concerns, 5) WLB strategies, and 6) hope: expectations for the future. In regard to the women's experiences with FWA, they reported mixed experiences: positive experiences and challenges. First, my participants had positive experiences in the following categories: 1) childcare, 2) less stress, 3) job satisfaction, 4) autonomy to control work schedules, and 5) career continuity. Then, they had

difficulties with the four issues: a) different challenges by types of FWA, b) organizational culture, c) job characteristics, and d) limited FWA options.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

My conflict is always between being me and being 'the mother of my children.' During my one-year maternity leave when I lived as a full-time housewife, I felt I lost myself. No matter how good I was at cleaning, cooking, washing, and taking care of my children, I was very gloomy because I didn't have any goals and motivations. There was nothing to my existence but being a mother to my daughters at home. I'm only called 'children's mother' at home, but at work, I am entirely myself and called by my name, Gyungock. That's why I cannot abandon my job despite my severe internal conflict between the roles of a mom and an employee.

From the personal conversation with Gyungock

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of the highly educated and married female Korean employees with work-life balance and flexible workplace arrangements in the Korean context. Three research questions guided this inquiry:

1. What are the experiences of the highly educated and married Korean female employees with work-life balance?
2. What are the experiences of the highly educated and married Korean female employees with flexible workplace arrangements?
3. How do flexible workplace arrangements impact the work-life balances of the highly educated and married Korean female employees?

In this chapter I first present a brief summary of the major findings, and then discuss them in relation to relevant literature. Based on my analysis, I derived the study implications for practice and research, followed by conclusions.

Discussion

In the previous chapter, I reported the superordinate and subthemes illuminating my participants' experiences with WLB, FWA and the impact of FWA on their WLB. Regarding the women's experiences with WLB, six superordinate themes were reported: (a) the meaning of work-life balance, (b) support systems, (c) career aspirations: "thin and long," (d) concerns, (e) WLB strategies, and (f) hope: expectations for the future. In terms of the women's experiences with FWA and the influence on their WLB, two superordinate themes, positive experiences and challenges, were presented. This section discusses each finding associated with the three research questions in relation to relevant literature.

The Issue of Work-Life Balance

The sixteen highly educated and married Korean female employees in my study shared a lot of common experiences with WLB, which I summarized into six aspects. They are: a) a support system from different sources (family, colleagues, and/or live-in-babysitter), b) ironical views of career aspirations—a strong desire for career continuity with lack of aspirations for career advancement, c) concerns faced by work and life domains (e.g., childcare stress, burnout, feeling out of the loop, and little personal life), d) physical and psychological strategies for WLB (e.g., concentrating on only their roles at work and family, one child strategy, setting lower expectations, having positive thinking), and e) their positive expectations for a better quality of life. More importantly, f) these experiences have been established based on their own meanings of WLB. Based on these findings, three major conclusions related to their WLB can be drawn. First, work-life balance is contextualized and constantly evolving. Second, the women's career aspirations were shaped by the way they defined the meaning of career in their context. Third, the key to WLB is how effectively the

women could manage the conflicts that occurred at work and home utilizing limited resources.

First, work-life balance is contextualized and constantly evolving. The women have created their own work-life balance by contextualizing the meaning of “balance.” In this sense, WLB is highly individualistic, subjective and context sensitive. When asked to define the concept of WLB, my participants shared the same understanding in the way in which they identified ‘life’ with ‘family’ or the ‘home’ domain, but their definitions of “balance” were noticeably different. Specifically, the women shared four perspectives of balance: a) a state of compatibility without role conflicts, b) one’s high psychological satisfaction with less psychological distress, c) an individual’s appropriate time distribution, and d) contingency-based balance. The first perception, shared by the majority of the participants, refers to a state of compatibility in which an individual could properly perform given roles without experiencing any role conflicts between work and home domains. The second perspective emphasized an individual’s psychological satisfaction and less psychological distress in both domains. Third, achieving work-life balance requires allocating an appropriate amount of time to perform duties in each of the two domains. Lastly, the balance meant an individual made endeavors to accommodate the unique needs in their realities, such as making adjustment of work or family related events.

The meaning of balance was considerably influenced by the participants’ experiences within their contexts. For example, Dajung and Eunyong, who had difficulty compartmentalizing their work and family, highlighted the importance of establishing clear boundaries between work and family in defining the “balance.” Lami, who placed a high value on her personal happiness, focused on an individual’s psychological satisfaction in

both domains. By becoming sensitive to their own realities (e.g. organization, family, and personality), my participants have created their own understanding of work-life “balance.” For some participants, the contingency nature of balance was useful for them to gauge the level of their work-life balance. The subjectivity in defining one’s WLB is supported by Fleetwood (2007) who noted the complexities of the concept of WLB and different meanings to different individuals. This finding is also consistent with Clark’s (2000) belief that “individuals manage and negotiate their work and family spheres and the borders between them in order to attain balance” (p. 750) in that the balance is viewed as a process for an individual to find his or her own balance through negotiations with given realities.

In terms of experiences with WLB, the participants expressed a high level of satisfaction. When I asked them to rate their satisfaction with WLB from 0 to 100, which was the only numerical question I used to understand the participants’ degree of satisfaction, eleven out of the sixteen women (68.8%) gave scores of 80 and above. Interestingly, these women attributed their high satisfaction with WLB to their gratitude for being able to maintain their jobs and looking after their children simultaneously. Many participants felt grateful that they were able to continue to work without career breaks and that their children were well taken care of by trustful caregivers (i.e., themselves, their mothers or mothers-in-law, or a live-in babysitter). For most participants, losing WLB meant experiencing career breaks or work-life conflict. In the Korean society where married female employees with children are vulnerable to career disruption due to childcare, my participants felt fortunate that their careers had not yet been interrupted.

For highly educated women, the meaning of job was also associated with their self-fulfillment and their value on independent identity (Jang, 2008; Jeong, 2004). Since losing

their jobs meant losing their identities as an independent individual, the participants stressed their career continuity for their WLB. In line with this finding, Supple (2007) and Bailey's (2011) research identified the high value for three identities (i.e., self, work, and motherhood) placed by full-time working mothers in higher education administrations. In this study, my participants believed that the balance between work and life was achieved when they could maintain dual identities as a mother and an employee, regardless of the quality of work and life. As a result, in the process of creating their WLB, the study participants often compromised with their choices (e.g., setting lower expectations for their husbands, reducing their desire for career advancement, limiting networking opportunities with colleagues, and opting to have only one child).

However, it should be noted that an individual's WLB is not a fixed state but constantly evolving. This is because WLB is contingent upon individual value decisions about their different roles. In other words, the roles expected of an individual likely differ at different life stages; so are the values placed by individuals on their life roles (Super, 1980). For example, almost all my participants focused on the role of mother because they had young children to take care of--with ages ranging from 2 to 11, and an average of 5.3 years. However, for some participants who had passed the critical parenting period (e.g., mothers who had children attending elementary school), their focus gradually shifted from their children to their own personal lives. In this sense, Chaeock's statement, "After my kids became elementary school students, the two values [focused on work and my child] to balance my work and life were changed. My current interest in work-life balance is the balance between the sum of work and my child and my personal life" (8ID12). This evidence illuminated the evolving nature of WLB according to one's different life course stage.

Second, the women's career aspirations were shaped by the way they defined the meaning of career in their context. One of the critical findings with the women's WLB experiences was their ambivalent attitude toward career aspirations. Whereas all participants revealed a strong craving for continuing employment, many of them were not interested in career advancement. In terms of their strong desire for career continuity, three main reasons existed: (a) financial support, (b) being a role model for their children, and (c) self-fulfillment. Many women stressed the financial support for them to keep working. This reason is consistent with literature, that is, with an increase of dual-earner couples, women's roles as financial providers are emphasized (Bae et al., 2013; Reindle et al., 2011). In addition, the participants' desire to become a good role model for their children and self-fulfillment were other important driving forces for their career continuity. In Korea where career women are recognized and stay-at-home mothers tend to be ignored (Jang & Merriam, 2004), the participants wanted to maintain their careers to make their children proud as well as to keep their self-esteem as highly educated professional women.

In reality, however, it was not easy for the participants to balance multiple roles at work and home because the Korean society constantly expected them to be faithful to the role of mother regardless of their status as an employee. Responding to the traditional values, while many participants put their childcare first, they tended to establish a clear boundary between work and family so that they could distribute their time and energy appropriately. Their effort can be partly explicated by the segmentation theory that "individuals intentionally compartmentalize their roles to prevent presenteeism" (McMillan, Morris, & Atchely, 2011, p. 9) in order to reduce their time-based conflict. However, the participants did acknowledge that due to childcare, they invested less time and energy in work now,

compared to when they were single or before having a child. They believed that such decision likely had a negative impact on their career advancement. As a result, they tended to lower their aspirations for higher positions.

In this finding, the participants' attitudes were characterized as "thin and long," which meant pursuing low or mid-level positions with less pressure or responsibility so that they could consistently perform both roles at work and home rather than seek higher-level positions with more responsibilities and risk. Seemingly, the participants, with a lack of desire for career advancement, did not complain about their career choices. Rather, most of them felt lucky to have both opportunities, maintaining their careers as well as taking care of their children. The participants' attitude would be deeply related to the phenomenon of the high rate of career-interrupted women in Korea. As stated previously in Chapter I, more than 50% of married women in Korea aged 25-59 have experienced career interruption due to marriage, pregnancy, and childcare (Ministry of Gender Equality & Family, 2014). In the Korean labor market, the employment rate of Korean women in 2015 between the ages of 25 and 29 was 68.8%, between ages 30-34 was 57.7%, and between ages 35-39 was 54.9%. Among them, the female employment rate for women aged 35 to 39 was 11.7 % lower than the OECD average. The major reason for the rapidly decreased female employment rate for Korean women in their 30s was ascribed to a career break due to childcare (Shin et al., 2016). For this reason, my participants seemed to feel that they were successful in "catching two rabbits at the same time" without experiencing a career interruption.

During the interviews, many participants consistently reported their changed career values after becoming a mother. *"While raising my two children as a mother, my dream that I had as a new employee has decreased. I don't have any desire to show a high performance,*

or any ambition to rise high in my profession now.” (Gyungock, 14ID1) As seen, many participants made compromises considering their realities (e.g., the pressure as primary caregivers, male-centered organizational culture, etc.) of working mothers in Korea. Given such realities, while they have redefined the meaning of their careers, they wanted to hold at least two identities, one as a mother and the other as a career woman. This finding is aligned with Gysbers and Moore’s (1975) definition of life career development, which is “self-development over the life span through the integration of the roles, settings, and events of a person’s life” (p. 315), in that it emphasized one’s self-development in career development according to the person’s life stages.

On the other hand, the level of human or financial resources my participants had resulted in different results in the participants’ aspirations for career advancement. Some participants (Ayoung, Dajung, Eunyoung, Herim, Fangsook, Nami, and Pado), who received full support with childcare and/or domestic work from their parents or a live-in babysitter, expressed relatively high aspirations for career achievement and promotions. However, the other participants, who assumed the parenting role and domestic work without others’ support, were less interested in career advancement. This difference shows the impact of a woman’s possession of resources on her career path, ultimately affecting the whole work-life balance as well.

The third conclusion is that a key to WLB is how effectively the women could manage the conflicts that occurred at work and home utilizing limited resources. The core of an individual’s WLB identified by the findings was deeply connected with how to effectively manage one’s potential and/or current conflicts at work and in life based on finite resources. Given the multiple roles of mother, spouse, and employee, the cause of conflicts and strains

my participants faced mostly originated from their lack of time and energy resources. Particularly, in the Korean culture with strong traditional gender role expectations, the full weight of the participants' responsibilities as primary caregivers caused them to undergo more childcare-related time and energy strains. Their role conflict, caused by a scarcity of resources, was consistent with McMillan, Morris, & Atchely's (2011) assertion that, "the total amount of time and/or energy available to an individual is fixed and participation in multiple roles decreases the total amount of time and/or energy available to meet all demands" (p. 9).

In this sense, the women's experiences with WLB were largely linked to their practical and substantial efforts to reduce the time and energy-based conflicts. For effective distribution of finite resources, they established various strategies. The most frequently used strategy was their support systems from family, colleagues, and/or babysitters. Especially, the resource of the women's mothers or mothers-in-law comprised the biggest portion (12 out of the 16 women, 75%) of their support system. Six of the women have been fully supported by their mothers. In these cases, grandmothers provided childcare and took on the role of primary caregivers so that the participants could concentrate on their work. The mothers' active support for their daughters was strongly combined with their desire for their daughters not to remain as full time housewives like they did and live as professional career women. Additionally, an important discussion about the support system was associated with the level of one's resources as well. The more human and/or economic resources the women had, the better work-life balance they could reach. Those who received full-support from their mothers, mothers-in-law, or a live-in babysitter felt less stress about childcare or domestic work because their time and energy devoted to the problems were shared by or

replaced with their mothers, mothers-in-law, or a live-in babysitter. Furthermore, for Pado who employed a live-in babysitter for 9 years since her first child's birth, showed that financial capital functioned as an important factor to sustain one's work-life balance.

Next, most of the participants tried to create balance in their multiple given roles by intentionally reducing their time and/or energy in one domain, either work or home (e.g. concentrating only on work, participating in few company dinners, concentrating only on the role of mother, performing the minimum domestic work, one child strategy, etc.) depending on their priorities and the degree of urgency. The participants' psychological WLB strategies (e.g. set lower expectations for their husbands and positive attitudes) are also interpreted in this perspective. By setting lower expectations for their husbands' family roles as well as positively accepting their "unfair" and "unchangeable" realities, the women wanted to minimize the conflicts with their husbands and save their energy and reduce the stress due to the conflicts.

Among the several strategies, one of the most interesting findings was one child strategy. As demonstrated previously, eight women (53.3%) out of the fifteen participants with child/children did not have plans to have any more children, either temporarily or permanently. They were very afraid of having more children because of the anticipated double burdens exclusive to mothers in Korea in which women's roles as primary caregivers are emphasized and their husbands passively participate in parenting roles at home, while work-centered organizational values are expected in the workplace. With this background, having one child was a realistic strategy "to manage my work and family" chosen by many participants. This strategy clearly reflected many women's reactions to the social and organizational culture in Korea in which is disadvantageous to female employees with

child/children. This finding corresponded to the results of a recent survey about the low birth rate in Korea in that 70% of the total respondents do not have plans for more children because of their economic and social problems. For this reason, the majority of the women respondents pointed out the unfair organizational treatment and unfriendly family culture toward female employees with child/children (Kim, 2016).

In sum, the participants' WLB experiences, including the numerous strategies and attitudes they adopted to cope with their realities, were largely determined by how well they could manage their finite resources (e.g., time and energy). In fact, resources were one of the substantial keys to avoid the women's potential and/or current conflicts occurring at work and home.

Flexible Workplace Arrangements and Influences on Work-Life Balance

My sixteen participants described their experiences with their FWA as both positive and challenging. Their positive experiences were highlighted from five perspectives: a) childcare, b) less stress, c) job satisfaction, d) autonomy to control work schedules, and e) career continuity.

Positive experiences. First, regardless of a person's context and the type of FWA, FWA was mainly utilized to take care of their children (e.g. children's medical appointments, drop off and pick up from daycare or school, parent meetings, spending more time with their children, etc.). Most of the participants were highly satisfied with their FWA in that they could perform the roles as mothers to some extent and lessen the feelings of guilt toward their children for not being able to spend more time with them. Second, FWA helped reduce the women's physical and psychological stress by saving commuting time and energy. Third, the opportunity of FWA increased the participants' commitment to their jobs and companies

because many women felt better understood by their companies regarding their difficulties as working mothers. Fourth, they felt satisfied that they were able to have autonomy to control their work schedule outside of the traditional work hours. Last, FWA was utilized as a retention or talent management strategy. For some participants, the availability of FWA prevented them from quitting their jobs due to the conflict with childcare.

Even in the non-Western context of Korea, the positive outcomes of FWA identified by the participants corresponded to the results of existing Western studies related to FWA benefits (e.g. physical and mental health and well-being, increased energy, decreased stress, more job satisfaction, increased organizational commitment, and improved morale; Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Deery, 2008; Kossek & Ozeki, 1999; Moen, Kelly & Hill, 2011).

The positive impacts of FWA on WLB. Connecting the findings of the participants' WLB experience overall, FWA considerably contributed to improving their WLB in several ways. Childcare issues, which were the most important concern perceived by almost all participants for their WLB, often created the participants' time and energy-based conflicts caused by their difficulty in meeting the demands of work and family with finite resources. In this respect, all types of FWA helped relieve the participants' time and energy based conflicts and strains by providing them with the autonomy to choose their work schedules and work locations. Whereas other WLB strategies (e.g. "be present" in their roles, setting lower expectations, one child strategy, and positive attitude) are the participants' personal efforts to lessen their time and energy based strains, FWA can be understood as an organizational support system to help save their time and energy.

Additionally, considering the participants' high value on motherhood in their WLB, the FWA benefit of childcare helped them reduce the feelings of guilt toward their children

by increasing their commitment to the role of mothers. Circularly, their lowered pressure on childcare along with the increased loyalties to their companies helped maintain or reinforce the identity valuing work and self. Consequently, FWA played a critical role in reducing the women's time and energy-based conflicts and helping maintain their identities as a mother and an employee.

Challenges. Although the positive experiences reported by my participants are not much different from those revealed by the previous FWA studies in the Western contexts, the challenges they experienced illuminated unique contextual factors (i.e., social, organizational, and personal) that shaped the participants' different experiences with FWA. In my study, the participants' FWA experiences were challenged by a) the types of FWA, b) organizational culture, c) job characteristics, and d) limited FWA options.

First, the participants experienced different challenges depending on type of FWA, which was ascribed to the unique characteristics of each FWA by nature. For example, the users of *staggered work hours* had difficulty with taking care of their children according to their changed daily work schedule. Staggered work hours based on an individual's chosen work schedule (starting work early or late) let the participants choose either morning or evening hours for taking care of their children. As their choices affected their or their children's life patterns, when the results fell short of their expectations, some participants expressed ambivalent feelings about using this FWA. For this reason, one user of staggered work hours finally quit this FWA. Next, the women who utilized *reduced work hours* seemed to have a relatively higher satisfaction than the users of staggered work hours. However, one major complaint was the "do the same with less" issue, which meant the same amount of work was still given to the participants despite their reduced salaries. The lack of

organizational backup or support system for their reduced work hours was pointed out as a critical problem. For *telecommuting*, all three users had difficulty with compartmentalizing work and home, which made them feel like they were “working 24/7” or “working overtime all the time.” While two users’ satisfaction with their telecommuting was very high, the other user’s failure to manage the boundaries finally caused her to stop telecommuting. Last, for *full time part time hour, or “Happy Employee,”* the absence of a clear operation system and organizational policies (e.g. evaluation, promotion, and general employee treatment) to deal with this unique FWA emerged as the biggest concern. As this FWA has recently been created and implemented as a national policy for career-interrupted women in Korea, the FWA was at a very unfledged stage.

Second, the implementation of FWA was greatly influenced by the characteristics of the organizations and organizational culture in Korea (e.g., the organizational types—private, public, or foreign, traditional organizational culture, and male-centered organizational culture). As FWA was basically conceived as an organizational strategy to support employees’ quality of lives, the organizational vision and culture orientation toward employees’ WLB largely determined the level of implementation and settlement of FWA. In other words, regardless of the organizational types, the more women/family-friendly organizational cultures and policies organizations were oriented toward, the more positive experiences with FWA the participants had. In contrast, the traditional organizational culture (i.e., collectivism, long working hours, frequent night overtime, and walking on eggshells around supervisors) was pointed out as a major hindering factor for the participants to use their FWA freely. Particularly, in the organizational culture where long working hours and night overtime are prevalent, many participants felt uncomfortable if they “stood out” for

using FWA among their colleagues who did not use it. Last, gendered use of FWA was another challenge. As FWA is regarded as a policy for caregivers (Powell, 2013), in the context where almost all participants took on the role of primary caregivers, the major users of FWA were the women. This finding supports Subramaniam's (2011) assertion that FWA may reinforce the conventional structure of gender roles and aggravates women's domestic and family responsibilities.

Third, the participants' job characteristics, including their positions and their roles in the departments, allowed them to easily utilize their FWA or prevented them from using their FWA. That is, the women's unique job characteristics (e.g. a researcher, an interpreter, a happy employee, or an international business coordinator) enabled them to be "the beneficiaries" of FWA. While many participants felt they were blessed to work in the environment, they wished for a greater expansion of FWA to other married female employees who were not offered it. According to Statistics Korea (2015), among the total paid employees, the rate of FWA users was 16.3%, and the rate except for part time work was reported to be only 5.4%. Additionally, the fact that FWA is currently adopted and implemented in some large companies, public organizations, or foreign companies let the participants perceive that they are among the small numbers of FWA recipients. As half of my participants were in more unique positions in their companies due to their job characteristics, their feelings as beneficiaries of FWA were increased.

Last, many participants reported that the limited types of FWA and work schedules decreased the effectiveness of FWA. The limited FWA options and work schedules did not match some participants' life patterns and were not able to satisfy their diversified personal demands. As a result, some participants (Bokyung, Fangsook, and Nami) voluntarily stopped

using their FWA. An interesting finding in this issue was that all three participants who voluntarily quit their FWA wanted to utilize reduced work hours if their companies provide this option. They believed that reduced work hours would be of substantial help for childcare rather than the modest FWA like the staggered work hours or partial telecommuting they utilized. In line with this finding, according to Bohen and Viveros-Long's (1981) study, the modest schedule flexibility in organizations were not sufficient to relieve the conflicts of working mothers who served as primary caregivers. Accordingly, Pamela Stone (2007) pointed out that the current level of flexibility policies are very restrained and do not relieve employees' time pressures for their and their family well-being. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) also asserted "the degree of flexibility permitted and the needs of the employees may jointly affect the prevalence of work-family conflict" (p. 78).

The negative impact of FWA on WLB. As seen, my participants' unsatisfying experiences with FWA were greatly influenced by their different organizational, social, and individual contexts. Regarding the perceived challenges above, thirteen of my participants believed their FWA had positive influences on their WLB, compared to their previous work and family life. However, the other three participants opted to quit their FWA because they felt the loss was bigger than the benefits. The main reasons for abandoning their FWA: a difficulty with childcare due to the changed daily work schedule, a financial reason due to reduced salary but the same amount of work, low work efficiency caused by the difficulty with compartmentalizing work and family. This showed that every FWA does not fit all individuals' personal needs and life patterns. Also, the three women commonly pointed out that the limited types of FWA and work schedules provided by their companies did not substantially reduce their main work-life conflict with childcare. Rather, for two of the

women (Fangsook and Nami), their mothers' full support for childcare was considered the biggest support to sustain their WLB.

A New Conceptual Framework

The findings and discussions presented about the participants' experiences with WLB and FWA are explicated in the new conceptual framework of Figure 3.

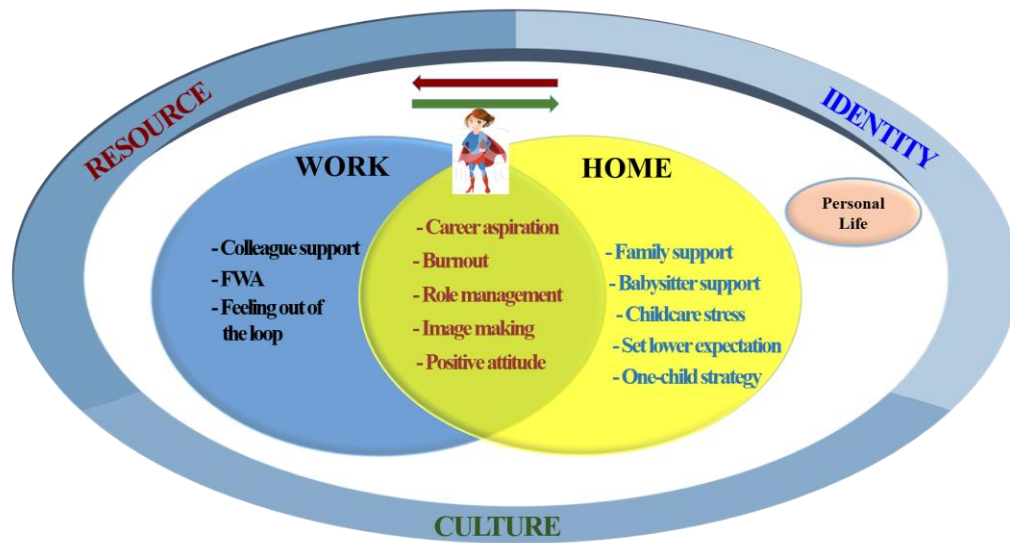


Figure 3. A New Conceptual Framework of Women's Experiences with WLB and FWA

As daily border-crossers who come and go between work and home domains, the participants had different experiences, including complicated feelings, in each domain (work, border, and home). Responding to the different experiences, they tried to create their own work-life balance in their contexts while developing different strategies (physical and/or psychological) at each domain and relying on support systems to minimize their conflicts occurring at work and home. For example, the border area was the space where the participants shared common experiences and utilized some integrated strategies between the

work and home domains. Their experiences were also presented as the outcomes of interference with each domain. The women's experiences in the border area were: lack of aspiration for career advancement, physical and psychological burnout, role management—referring to one's effort to carry out his or her assigned roles by prioritizing the roles hierarchically to manage their multiple responsibilities, and an image making strategy as a working mother—switching their dual identities at each domain, and having a positive attitude for their WLB.

The participants' experiences in the home domain consisted of family support, babysitter support, childcare stress, setting lower expectations for their husbands and their traditional gender roles (e.g. a minimum of domestic work and/or traditional roles of spouse), and the strategy of having one child. Their experiences at home were largely associated with childcare-related issues and psychological and physical strategies to relieve or solve the problems. Additionally, the most distinctive experiences identified by the participants in the work domain were colleague support, FWA, and feeling out of the loop. While the women felt out of the loop due to lack of networking with other colleagues caused by childcare, they resorted to organizational support systems such as FWA and colleague support. In the non-work areas other than home, some participants who passed an early parenting period had a desire to have a personal life for their professional development or leisure time.

In the process of creating their own WLB, their WLB experiences were mostly shaped by the interaction among three components—resource, identity, and culture. That is, given the finite time and energy resources due to the women's multiple roles, how they acquired and utilized other resources (e.g. financial capital, human resource, organizational support systems such as FWA) is an influential key to developing their WLB. From the

identity perspective, within the tension between being a mother and being an employee, the individuals' efforts to maintain their dual identities were the second key for WLB. Last, WLB experiences were created within their family, organizational, and national culture, which were very contextual.

Practical Implications

This study is one of few studies focusing on highly educated and married female employees' experiences with WLB and FWA in a non-Western context. Findings from this study shed light on the challenges experienced by many married Korean female employees in balancing work and life in the Korean context. At the same time, this study also confirmed the women's strong desire to change some of the unfair organizational and traditional gender cultures to improve their quality of life. These findings provide valuable insights and guidelines for national policy makers, organizational leaders, HRD practitioners, and female employees regarding how to promote the quality of the professional career women's lives in the Korean context. The practical implications for WLB and FWA are presented from three perspectives: individual, organizational, and national.

Individual Perspective

At the individual level, an individual should clearly understand his or her contexts from work and home through critical personal reflection. As the concept of WLB is highly subjective to one's contexts, without understanding the unique individual contexts, it will be difficult for the person to recognize substantial needs for WLB. The critical personal reflection would include the understanding of family (e.g., number of children and family support) and organizational characteristics (e.g., the level of work demands, the provision of family-friendly policies; Michel & Clark, 2011); and what resources (e.g. individual, family, and organizations) he or she has, and how to appropriately utilize them when needed.

Examining the current WLB strategies that he or she frequently uses should be included in the personal reflection as well. In line with this perspective, Peng, Ilies, and Dimotakis (2011) elaborated, “a personal reflection toward one’s current boundary management style and the courage to experiment with alternative approaches” (p. 137) would be helpful in creating a better WLB. Furthermore, based on the outcomes of the personal reflection, an individual needs to keep honestly communicating with all the interested parties (i.e. husband, children, mother, mother-in-law, supervisor, colleagues, etc.) about his or her difficulties and improvements related to WLB and FWA. Ultimately, the critical personal reflection would help an individual establish more specified and advanced WLB strategies.

In terms of FWA, it is important to find a common vision between the employee (an individual) and the employer. Currently in Korea, FWA is recognized more as an organizational policy for employees to correspond to the national women-friendly policy rather than for the needs of both employer and employee. In order to create a win-win situation for both parties, employees who utilize FWA need to make an effort to show their positive outcomes of the FWA (e.g., high work efficiency and performance, increased commitment to their organizations, etc.). Additionally, as mentioned by some participants in this study, constant professional development (e.g., knowledge, skills, abilities) would also help the increase of work efficiency and time management in using their FWA.

Last, Korean married female employees need to establish their career plans in the long term. As said previously, one’s WLB is changeable depending on the person’s different life role expectations according to their life course stages. At the current stage, the most appreciated value identified by many participants was the role of primary caregivers for their young children who seriously need their support. To be faithful to the role of caregivers,

most of the women reduced their career ambitions despite their strong desire for career continuity. Considering the women's dual career aspects, individuals also need to think about their specific career plans and goals from a long-term perspective after finishing their critical parenting period.

Organizational Perspective

The importance of the roles of an organization in promoting the quality of employees' lives is well recognized (Burke, 2011; Casey & Chase, 2004). As identified in my participants' cases and other literature, a critical factor affecting Korean married female employees' WLB outcome was the traditional organizational culture that promotes long working hours, collectivism, and a male-centered working structure. Many participants in this study required an organizational culture change with a special emphasis on the reduction of long working hours for a better WLB. In response to the women's desires to improve working hours, some organizations have adopted FWA, but the FWA-friendly working environment has not been fully established yet.

The process of accepting the new practice, FWA, into an organization requires changes in people's perceptions and behaviors (Burke, 2011). In the long term, it is also connected with a paradigm change in the concepts of working time and space in Korea. However, when people confront a new environment, they may feel anxious and unhappy about the changes because they feel comfortable with the current culture and sometimes are uncomfortable with a focus overly oriented toward change for the sake of change and less care about the individual employees (Smollan & Sayers, 2009). To successfully establish FWA in Korean organizations, based on the understanding of the nature and the process of

change, HRD practitioners and organizational leaders should prepare for and implement short and long-term plans for various groups of employees to build up a FWA culture.

Specifically, as Korean employers and employees still have an inadequate knowledge of FWA, organizations as a main operator should establish plans regarding how to develop, implement, and sustain flexible workplace conditions (Casey & Chase 2004). For example, it will be helpful if top executives provide employees and their supervisors with mandatory programs and/or guidelines for successful flexibility arrangements, time management, and negotiation strategies. This is particularly important to Korea as it has been identified as one of the countries with the strongest orientation towards uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede Center, 2014). In addition, as Burke (2011) asserted, changes in people's perceptions and behaviors are constantly encouraged by their organizational leaders (i.e., supervisors and managers). Burke's (2011) statement implies the importance of leaders' roles in leading the change in organizational culture in general. In this sense, an updated approach to leadership education with the perspectives of work flexibility and women/family-friendly culture should be offered in leadership education programs for organizational leaders.

One of my participants' strong complaints about FWA was the limited FWA options and work schedules. Regarding this challenge, organizations should try to provide more diverse FWA options and work schedules that can help increase people's WLB. The process of gradual steps to provide diverse FWA with a greater degree of flexibility would include pilot tests of the applicability and effectiveness of various FWA and work schedules. Above all, for sustainable organizational support, the efforts to settle FWA and create a women/family-friendly organizational culture should be enacted based on the belief that

FWA is a helpful organizational strategy bringing positive effects and useful for both employee and employer (Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Deery, 2008; Kossek & Ozeki, 1999).

Last, considering married female employees feelings of being out of the loop and lack of networking owing to their passive participation in company activities due to their role performance as primary caregivers, HRD practitioners and organizational leaders need to come up with ways to decrease women's psychological distress and maximize their networking in the workplace. This could be utilizing mentoring programs for married female employees' psychological support or expanding to a get-together luncheon rather than a company dinner.

National Perspective

From the national perspective, the Korean government can play an important role in supporting married female employees' WLB and settling FWA. South Korea is one of the countries with strong NHRD traditions, which means it is well positioned to take actions in multiple ways. In order to promote married female employees' WLB, first, the central government must actively and constantly plan and implement more substantial alternatives that lead to a change in the existing traditional culture and values from work and family (e.g. traditional gender role expectations, male breadwinner model, work-centered values, and long working hours in the workplace), that were pointed out as the major barriers of married female employees' WLB (Oh, Kim, & Um, 2012). Since the late 2000s, the central government has implemented some women/family policies (e.g., prenatal/postnatal medical service, the expansion of daycare centers, flexible working hours) to relieve the perceived barriers, but the outcomes have not been fully successful (Bae et al., 2013).

Meanwhile, although FWA has been positively appreciated as an active alternative to change the traditional work hours, limited implementations of FWA along with few FWA options focused on some large private companies, public organizations, and foreign companies was noted as a challenge by my participants and Joeng's (2010) study. The execution of the new practice, FWA, may involve pain and costs for all tripartite partners (employers, employees, and the government). Without the support of multiple constituents the government alone is unlikely to achieve satisfactory results for their FWA initiative. Thus, the first action which must be taken by the government is to identify common interests and a shared vision among all the involved constituents, and then articulate how each party may benefit from FWA. The government should consider various strategies regarding how to gain buy-in from multiple stakeholders. Examples of strategies may include making recommendations of FWA programs to organizations, formulating national policies to promote the use of FWA for Korean women, and providing financial support to organizations that adopt FWA. Furthermore, the government should constantly pilot and find FWA options suitable for the Korean context in its many public organizations. For the pilot tests, the FWA options that have not been adopted in Korea would be compressed workweeks, job sharing, part-year work, and alternating locations (Korea Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 2013).

Last, concerning gender stereotypes that may impede the implementation of women-friendly policies, including FWA, in the Korean context, gender perspectives must be considered during the entire process of implementation of the policies. As stated previously, the phenomenon of Korean married women's low economic participation is closely interwoven with their double burden from work and family, influenced by male-centered culture in both domains. If the implementations of women-friendly policies do not take into

account the gender perspective, it will not function as a real solution to improve women's WLB. For example, as Hong (2012) noted, FWA is a double-edged sword. It can be "a strategic choice to balance work and family life, or a gender trap that strengthens the gender division of labor in the family and fall to the less decent jobs in the labor market" (p. 165). For this reason, she emphasized the necessity of the shared usage of FWA by both genders. Correspondingly, in order to establish a genuine women-friendly culture, we first need to recognize and carefully examine the gendered roles defined for women and men in the Korean context (Lee, Chang and Kim 2011). Then, we must seek social and institutional support to break down the patriarchal culture that has dominated work and home lives in Korea. This will be a first step for cognitive restructuring to change an organizational culture.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Although WLB is important for all employees, I narrowed my research focus to married female employees because the WLB issue in Korea has been traditionally framed as the problem of female employees, especially working mothers. In this sense, the perspective of WLB and FWA targeting various groups needs to be expanded. For example, one of the conclusions in this study was that the meaning of balance is influenced by an individual's context. The balanced state of work and life my participants believed was in maintaining their dual identities as an employee and mother. Considering the subjective meaning of balance, in a further study, it would be meaningful to explore the male counterparts' experiences with WLB and the meaning of balance in their context. The comparison with both gender's WLB experiences and meanings of balance will contribute to expanding work-life related research in Korea. This study would also support the findings identified by the small number of my participants in a more balanced perspective.

Next, all the participants in this study were in their 30s and 40s, but WLB research on female employees in different age groups needs to be further explored. This is because an individual's life stage would influence his or her different experiences. In a similar vein, considering the ages of my participants' children were very young (the averaged 5.3 years old), WLB research on female employees with children with different age groups should also be expanded. My participants were a relatively privileged group in their education and status as full-time employees. In this sense, a more diverse WLB research on married female employees with different social, economic, educational, and family backgrounds (e.g., part-time or hourly employees, low wage workers, and female single earner) should be examined.

Third, an individual's life is composed of multiple layers, including work, family, personal, community, and spiritual arenas (Whittingtone, Maellaro, & Galpin, 2011). However, while this study was focused on the participants' work and family areas connected to their career path, other non-work areas (i.e., community, spiritual, and personal arena) were not largely highlighted. In a future study, an individual's WLB from a more holistic view should be explored.

Fourth, this study had methodological limitations in examining married female employees' WLB and FWA related issues because only the phenomenological approach was utilized to understand the essence of the participants' experiences with WLB and FWA. Thus, different methodological approaches (e.g. grounded theory, case study, etc.) to study this group and their WLB and FWA issues can be considered for further studies such as developing a substantive theory or dealing with a case or multiple cases of the group in a specific working environment.

Last, this study was only focused on the Korean case of highly educated and married

female employees. As the individuals' experiences with WLB and FWA would be differently shaped by the national context, cross-cultural comparative studies with Korean and cases from other countries would be very meaningful in a future study.

Conclusions

During the interviews, the sixteen highly educated and married female employees shared their experiences with WLB and FWA. Their WLB experiences were differently shaped in their contexts (e.g. organization, family, and individual) with their subjective meanings of balance. Despite the women's various contexts, their WLB could be commonly discussed from two perspectives: identity and resources. First, the identity perspective referred to how married female employees can keep their dual identities as a self and a mother in balance in their career paths. The process for the participants to find their balance often required them to negotiate and compromise with their perceived "unfair" and "unchangeable" realities. In this respect, WLB can be understood as a matter of an individual's self-development over the life span of an individual in the holistic view of life career development (Gysbers & Moore, 1975). Next, the perspective of resources in WLB was about how to manage an individual's conflicts occurring at work and home given the finite resources such as time and energy. Furthermore, the outcome of the participants' WLB was considerably influenced by the level of human or financial resources they had. The outcomes according to the level of an individual's resources toward WLB would usually be determined by the following questions: how many resources (e.g. time, energy, financial capital, social capital, organizational support such as FWA, etc.) do they have? And how much/often/freely can they utilize the resources they have when needed? It was evident that

the level of the participants' possession of resources affected their career paths, ultimately influencing their whole work-life balance overall.

Regarding the participants' experiences with FWA, despite the three women who opted to abandon their FWA, most of the participants felt that FWA was one of the important organizational support systems to boost their current WLB. However, it does not mean that FWA is a perfect means to solve problems with married female employees' WLB, but it is largely proven as one of the critical organizational alternatives to support their WLB. For more successful settlement of FWA in Korea, the ways to overcome the challenges identified by the participants should be constantly and strategically planned, implemented, and evaluated by organizations and the Korean government.

During the interviews, many participants stated WLB should be considered a social issue that the Korean society should solve together, not only an individual or women's issue. In light of their statements, an individual's authentic WLB achievement can be realized in the collaborative work among several stakeholders, including an individual, family, organization, community, and nation. A good collaboration with the associated parties will contribute to improving "the quality of balance" of work and life for highly educated and married female employees in Korea, without letting them remain with their low or modest quality of balance any longer (resulting from lower expectations from their husbands and/or low career aspiration for advancement).

Throughout my dissertation work, Bokyung's statement kept running through my mind. This was because I felt she was speaking for the majority of Korean highly educated and married women about their realities and their desires and support. I come to a close with Bokyung's remark:

We are highly educated and qualified manpower. If these women's career continuities are not maintained and protected in this society, women don't need to study any longer. Following the old-fashioned manner, it's enough for women to just give birth to a child and raise it. However, remember there are many highly educated women in Korea. Many female employees have still encountered several difficulties with continuing their jobs. Childcare is the most challenging problem. To support many female employees' social and economic activities, a stronger top-down policy from the central government is desperately needed because the women's problem stems from social problems, not personal ones. As long as the women's career continuity is not securely supported, no matter if we earn a doctoral degree we don't need to study because, after all, our careers would not be utilized in this society (Bokyoung, 6ID13).

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APPENDIX A

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY IRB APPROVAL LETTER

DIVISION OF RESEARCH



DATE: November 16, 2015

MEMORANDUM

TO: Jia Wang
TAMU - College Of Education & Human Dev - Educational Adm & Human
Resource Develop

FROM: Dr. James Fluckey
Chair, TAMU IRB

SUBJECT: Expedited Approval—Continuing Review

Study Number: IRB2014-0760D

Title: The Highly Educated and Married Female Employees' Experiences with
Flexible Workplace Arrangements and Work-Life Balance in South Korea

**Date of
Determination:**

Approval Date: 01/28/2015

**Continuing
Review Due:** 10/15/2016

**Expiration
Date:** 11/15/2016

**Documents
Reviewed and
Approved:**

Only IRB-stamped approved versions of study materials (e.g., consent forms, recruitment materials, and questionnaires) can be distributed to human participants. Please log into iRIS to download the stamped, approved version of all study materials. If you are unable to locate the stamped version in iRIS, please contact the iRIS Support Team at 979.845.4969 or the IRB liaison assigned to your area.

| Submission Components | | | |
|--|----------------|--------------|----------|
| Study Document | | | |
| Title | Version Number | Version Date | Outcome |
| Consent form-Dissertation (Korean version) | Version 1.1 | 12/23/2014 | Approved |
| Consent form-Dissertation | Version 1.1 | 11/08/2014 | Approved |

Document of Consent: Written consent in accordance with 45 CF 46.116/ 21 CFR 50.27

Comments:

- The continuing review for this protocol has been approved.
- Research is to be conducted according to the study application approved by the IRB prior to implementation.

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1186 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843-1186
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<http://rcb.tamu.edu>

APPENDIX B

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY CONSENT FORM

Project Title: The Highly Educated and Married Female Employees' (HEMFE) Experiences with Flexible Workplace Arrangements and Work-Life Balance in South Korea

You are invited to take part in a research study being conducted by Hyoun Ju Kang, a Ph. D. candidate from Texas A&M University. This study is under the supervision of Dr. Jia Wang, my dissertation chair. The information in this form is provided to help you decide whether or not to participate. If you decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign this consent form. If you decide not to participate, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits you normally would have.

Why Is This Study Being Done?

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of the highly educated and married female Korean employees (HEMFE) on flexible workplace arrangement (FWA) and the influence of FWA on their work-life balance in the Korean context. This study will provide a deep understanding of the experiences with FWA of women as one of the main stakeholders in the very nascent stage of adopting FWA in South Korea.

Why Am I Being Asked To Be In This Study?

You are being asked to be in this study because you are a married Korean career woman with higher education (with a bachelor degree and above) who have or had experienced a flexible workplace arrangement (FWA). This study is being conducted to fulfill the requirements for the completion of a Ph.D. dissertation.

How Many People Will Be Asked To Be In This Study?

Approximately 30-40 people will be contacted as the potential study participants. Overall, a total of 10-20 people will be invited for the interviews.

What Will I Be Asked To Do In This Study?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked share your experiences with the FWA and report its impact on your work-life balance. You will also be asked to participate in an individual face-to-face interview that will last approximately one to two hours. If needed, you will also be contacted for follow up and clarification questions. In addition, you will be invited to review your interview transcript and the researcher' initial interpretation of your data to ensure your data will be accurately presented.

Will Photos, Video or Audio Recordings Be Made of Me during the Study? Yes

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely in a locked file cabinet and in computer files protected with a password in the home of Hyoun Ju Kang, and only Hyoun Ju Kang and her dissertation chair, Dr. Jia Wang, will have access to the audio recordings. Any recordings will be kept for five years and then erased.

_____ I give my permission for audio recordings to be made of me during my participation in this research study.

_____ I do not give my permission for audio recordings to be made of me during my participation in this research study.

What Are the Risks Involved in This Study?

The risks associated in this study are minimal, and are not greater than risks ordinarily faced in daily life. Although the researchers have tried to avoid risks, you may feel that some questions/procedures that are asked of you will be stressful or upsetting. You do not have to answer anything you do not want to.

What Are the Possible Benefits of This Study?

You may receive no direct benefit from participating in this study. However, the information collected in this study has the potential to assist Human Resource Development professionals and organizations in South Korea to develop married career employees' meaningful career development and work-life balance interventions for the population.

Will There Be Any Costs To Me?

There are no costs for taking part in the study.

Who Will Know About My Participation in This Research Study?

The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report. Research records will be stored securely and only the investigator, Hyoun Ju Kang, and her dissertation chair, Dr. Jia Wang, and representatives of regulatory agencies such as the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) and entities such as the Texas A&M University Human Subjects Project Program may access your records to make sure the study is being run correctly and that information is collected properly. The final report will be published in the form of a dissertation.

Whom do I contact with questions about the research?

If you have any questions regarding this study, you may contact Dr. Jia Wang or Hyoun Ju Kang.

Whom do I contact about my rights as a research participant?

This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program Office at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at 979-458-4067 or irb@tamu.edu.

What if I Change My Mind About Participating?

This research is voluntary and you have the choice whether or not to be in this research

study. You may decide to not begin or to stop participating at any time. If you choose not to be in this study or stop being in the study, there will be no effect on your employment, evaluation, or relationship to your affiliation.

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

I agree to be in this study and know that I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. The procedures, risks, and benefits have been explained to me, and my questions have been answered. I know that new information about this research study will be provided to me as it becomes available and that the researcher will tell me if I must be removed from the study. I can ask more questions if I want, and I can still receive services if I stop participating in this study. A copy of this entire consent form will be given to me.

Signature of Participant: _____ **Date:** _____

Printed Name:

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____ **Date:** _____

Printed Name: _____

APPENDIX C

RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear Prospective Participants:

I am writing to invite you to participate in a study of the highly educated and married female employees' experiences with flexible workplace arrangements and work-life balance in South Korea. The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experiences of the HEMFE with FWA and the influence of FWA on their work-life balance in the Korean context. The study is for my doctoral dissertation through the Department of Educational Administration and Human Resource Development at Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, USA.

I am looking for married Korean career women with higher education (with a bachelor degree and above) who have or had experienced a flexible workplace arrangement. If you meet these criteria and are willing to participate in this study, I would like to conduct an individual face-to-face interview with you that will last approximately one to two hours. Each interview will be audiotaped and transcribed with your consent. After the interview, the copy of the transcription will be sent to you for review and accuracy. If needed, I will conduct a shorter follow-up interview with you for additional questions and clarifications. The risks involved with participating in this study are minimal, and are not greater than risks ordinarily faced in everyday life. During the interview, if you want to discontinue the use of the recorder or the interview itself, please feel free to let me know. Further, you may choose not to discuss any questions you do not feel comfortable with, and even choose to withdraw from the study without any penalty.

All of your interview data will remain confidential and be accessed only by the primary investigator and co-investigator. These data will be used only to develop a better understanding of the HEMFE's experiences with FWA and their quality of lives in South Korea. The information collected through the interviews, including your name, affiliation, and any other identifiable information, will not be revealed in the final report. Your participation will be a very valuable resource of this important study. If you are interested in participating in this study please email me at amitie-04@tamu.edu by [date].

Thank you very much and I am looking forward to seeing you soon.

Best regards,
Hyoun Ju Kang, Ph. D. Candidate, Texas A&M University

*** This study has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. If you have any questions about the study regarding your rights as a participant, please contact these offices at 1-979-458-4076 or irb@tamu.edu.*

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SHEET

Interviewee Name:

Mailing Address:

Telephone Number:

Email Address:

Organization Information

- Name of Employer:
- Type of Organization: Public () Private ()
Large () Small and medium-sized ()

Work Experience

- Job Title:
- Organizational Tenure:
- Level of Position (entry, mid, senior level)

Personal Information

- Marital Status (e.g. married, divorced, etc.):
- Duration of marriage:
- Children: Number () Age ()
- Family Type (e.g. living with parents/in-laws):

Demographic Information

- Age:
- Education:

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Research Title: The Highly Educated and Married Female Employees' (HEMFE) Experiences with Flexible Workplace Arrangements (FWA) and Work-Life Balance in South Korea

Interviewee: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____ Location/Place: _____

Before the Interview:

- **Welcoming and appreciation for the participation.**
 1. With welcoming to the participant, before the interview, I will have approximately 5-10 minutes icebreaker time with the participation to build rapport with the participant.
- **Overview of the Purpose of the Interview and the Interview Procedures.**
 2. After that, I will overview the purpose of the study and the interview, including the interview procedures.
- **Obtain the written consent**
 3. Before starting the interview, I will walk the participant through the consent form and answer any questions she may have. I will obtain her written permission prior to the actual interviewing.

During the Interview:

4. The proposed questions will be used to guide the interview.
 - Tell me a bit about you (to gain more background knowledge beyond the demographic information)
 - Tell me about you as a professional woman.
 - Tell me about you as a wife.
 - How would you describe yourself as a mother?
 - What is a typical day like for you (both at work and at home)?
 - How do you define work-life balance?
 - Tell me about your experience with WLB.
 - What strategies do you use to balance your work and life?

- Tell me about your experience with FWA.
- What impact does the flexible workplace arrangement has on your work-life balance?
- What additional supports do you wish to have to balance your work and life?
- Is there anything else that you would like to share with me?

At the end of the Interview

5. I will briefly summarize the major discussion points and thank the participant for her time.
6. I will mention the follow up interview, email, or online chatting.
7. I will remind the interviewee of the transcription for her review later.

SAMPLE FIELD NOTES

SAMPLE FIELD NOTES

APPENDIX G

SAMPLE REFLEXIVE JOURNAL

Interviewee 11

Date & Time: 9.16. 2015. 12:00~1:15 p.m.

Place: 분당 정자역 카페거리 파스타집

이번 주 월화수목 연달아 있는 인터뷰, 이번 주 세번째 분당선에 몸을 실었다. 아침부터 다은이와 밥 때문에 또 씨름한 터라 기운이 없는 상태라 인터뷰가 더 걱정됐다. 정자역 5 번 출구 앞에서 기다리고 있노라니, 멀리서 부리나케 한 여자가 뛰어온다. 뛰어오는 모습만 봐도 에너지가 넘쳐 보이는 긴파마 머리에 선글라스를 쓴 그녀는 처음부터 친근하고 유쾌했다. 최근 라섹수술을 해서 야외에서는 선글라스를 계속 써야 한다고 친절하게 설명해준다. (선글라스가 눈보호 보다는 패션아이템이라는 의식이 강한 한국의 문화상...)

다양한 분야 (electronic, pipe, etc.)에 inspection & expediting job 을 하고 있는 ACES-GQS 라는 외국계 회사에서 international project coordinator 인 그녀는 이 회사가 설립됨과 거의 동시에 정규직으로 일하고 있다. 출산 후에 진로를 걱정하던 중, 이전 직장 (영어학원 강사)의 원장님 시아버지가 운영하고 있는 회사에 재택근무 조건과 함께 스카웃되었다. 항공우주학과를 전공하고 토목관련 회사에서 일을 한 경험과 영어실력이 합쳐져서 이 회사에 적합한 사람으로 스카웃 되었던 것이다. 현재는 주 2 회 재택근무를 하고 있지만, 처음에 주 3 회 재택근무라는 흥미로운 조건(육아 및 돈벌수 있는 기회) 때문에 이 회사를 더 선택하게 되었다.

그녀의 딸은 현재 한국 나이로 3 세 (만 2 세, 2013 년 8 월생)이고 남편은 잦은 국내외 출장으로 집을 비울 때가 많다. 결혼한 지는 5 년차, 결혼한지 1 년차에 남편 회사에서 미국에 연수를 보내줘서 1 년 동안 영어 공부를 하고 이후에 TESOL 자격증을 땀다. 재택근무를 할 때 딸아이는 9:30-4:30, 출근할 때는 9:30-7:00 까지 어린이집에 맡겨진다. 모든 가정일, 육아는 본인이 전담하며, 남편이 집에 있을 때도 ‘얼마나 힘들까’ 하며 본인이 전담한다고 한다. 결혼 초기에는 남편에 대한 불만이 있었지만, 어쩔 수 없다고 생각하고 포기, 체념의 과정을 거쳐 현재 일가정균형에 대한 만족도는 95 점으로 아주 높다. 나머지 부족한 5 점은 남편의 부재에서 온다고 말하지만, 남편이 가정에 관여하는 정도가 아주 낮기 때문에 5 점 밖에 부족함을 느끼지 않는다고 했다. 나머지 부족한 부분은 친정엄마가 육아, 가사일 등을 돌봐주시고 채워주시기 때문에 괜찮다고 했다. 그녀는 12 명의 조리원 동기들과 친밀한 관계를 유지하고 있었는데, 공감대를 형성할 수 있는 그룹들과의 소통, 만남 등을 통해 스트레스를 풀고 있었다. 그녀들은 “제 2 의 남편”으로서 역할을 하며 그녀의 빈자리를 채워주고 있었다.

그녀에게 일의 의미는 경제적인 수단 이외에, 엄마로서 자존감을 높일 수 있는 기회이기도 했다. 또한 일하는 시간 및 업무에 쏟는 에너지는 남편의 빈자리를 대체할 수 있는 시간이자 원천이기도 했다. 그녀는 재택근무를 할 수 있는 지금의 환경과 여건에 아주 만족함을 느꼈다. 아기가 6 개월 되면서부터 시작했던 회사일이라 육아와 일을 병행할 수 있다는 것이 더없는 메리트였다. 재택근무 환경은 듀얼모니터, 국제전화 비용 등 (매달 3 만원) 지원 받고 있고 업무와 관련한 일은 work reference 를 기록해서 매주 사장님에게 제출한다. 주로 해외 agency 들과 이메일로 업무를 처리하기 때문에 job characteristic 상 재택근무가 가능하다고도 했다. 재택근무시에 하루 9 시간을 근무하며, invoice 나 payment 관련한 업무는 집중과 print 사용 등이 더 편리한 회사에서 주로 처리를 한다. 기분 전환을 위해서는 커피숍에서 일을 하기도 하고, 재택근무하는 날에는 아이를 평상시보다 좀더 빨리 픽업한다. 딸이 9 시 이후에 잠이 들면 보통 10 시부터 메일을 체크하고 일을 할 때가 많다. 그래도 집에서 일을 하면 회사에서 일을 하는 것보다는 상대적으로 일을 적게 하는 느낌이라고 한다. 회사를 나갔다가 퇴근을 해도 외국 agent 와 연락을 하는 업무 특성상 수시로 이메일을 체크하고 밤에도 response 를 빨리 해줘야 하기 때문에, 어떤 부분에서는 집에서 일하는 것이 가볍든 아니든 일상화(?)가 되어 있기 때문이다. 앞으로도 재택근무를 할 수 있다면 끝까지 쭉 쓰고 싶다는 그녀, 지금 애기가 어려서 이것을 쓰면서 누릴 수 있는 장점이 있다면 아이가 더 자라면 재택근무의 장점이 더 극대화될 수 있을 것이라고 생각했다.

11 명의 인터뷰이들 중 유일하게 먼저 thank you 카톡을 주신 분, 다음에도 유쾌한 만남이 이어질 수 있길 기대한다.

APPENDIX H

DATA ANALYSIS SAMPLES

Excerpt From the Transcript of Interviewee 14

* reflection! 입사 제정 ~~해~~ 상충을 위해 바라는 시간, 에너지, 노력이 있다면 거기에 불투명함.
있도록 두개의 선택이 필요하다. ~~하~~ 여성 리더. or 직장상사로 가기 위해서
Interviewee 14. 1차 인터뷰 (40 minute 16 second) ; 시사충격

Interviewer: Hyounju Kang (강현주)
Date, Time, & Place: 충무로, 10. 5. 2015.

김: 내가 회사를 옮겨서 이 모든일 (예를 들보는 일)이 가능하다고 봐. 예전에 다녔던 회사는
대기업이고 일단 돈은 잘 벌잖아. 근데 대부분의 여자들은 도우미 아줌마를 되게 많이 썼거든. 월급의
반 이상을. 그래서 예전에는 도우미 아줌마 쓰는게 되게 자연스러웠는데 오히려 이 회사에 와서는
도우미 아줌마 쓰는 사람이 거의 없는 거라. 우리는 시차출근제라고 하는데 등원을 시키고 출근을
하고 하원은 짧은 도우미를 쓰거나 할머니, 할아버지, 아니면 남편이랑 반반씩 하거나 그런게 많아.
이 회사를 옮긴 건 육아 면에서는 (회사를 옮긴 게) 맞는 거 같다.
강: 판 부분에서는?
김: 일단은 돈은 벌어야 되니까 (웃음) 내가 이런 조건에서 일을 할 수 있다는 것을 제시해주니까.
근데 내가 예를 놓고 키우면서 생각하는게, 내가 이제 회사에서 뭔가 의욕적으로 성과를 내서 높은
자리를 가고 그런게 하나도 없거든. 그냥 가늘고 길게. 회사에 대한 만족이나 불만족 이런 게 별로
없다. 나는 내 일만 한다. 그게 없다. 그리고 아예 내가 목적을 갖고 회사를 옮겼잖아. 그러니까 아예
컨셉 자체를 내가 왜 때문에 일찍 가야 하는 사람이고 이런 얘기를 양육하고 있는 거에 대한 그런
컨셉을 잡았는 거라. 사실 이 직장을 알게 된 이유가 내랑 같은 회사에 다녔던 프로젝트에 있던
과장님이 먼저 이 회사를 옮겼는 거라. 근데 이 과장님은 여기 와서도 일을 더 우선시 했어. 이 분은
정말 일에 빠져서 오히려 양육을 포기하고 일만 많이 하셨거든. 이 분은 여기가 공공기관이니까 일이
많지 않을 것 같고 장기적으로 다닐 수 있으니까 오랫동안, 그래서 옮겼는데, 근데 이 분은
여기에서도 본이 아니게 컨셉 자체를 일을 중시하시고 그렇게 흘러갔는 거라. 너무 열심히 하신 거지.
이 분은 회사에서 중요한 사람으로 평가를 받지만 애들도 잘 못 보고, 상대적으로 남편이
공무원이어서 도움을 받지만. 그래서 최근에 육아휴직을 쓰시긴 하셨거든. 초등학교 1학년, 두 살
어린 애가 있어. 근데 2-3 년을 그렇게 살았더라고. 이 기관 자체가 생긴지 얼마 안돼서 변화가 많은
회사고, 나는 내가 컨셉을 잡은 거지. 나한테는 그렇게 시급한 일을 맡기지 않는다. 할 수도 없고. 예를
키우는 엄마라고 생각을 하니까. 하는 일 자체도 크리티컬하게 그런 일을 하는 것도 아니고 같이
일하시는 분도 좋고 그래서. 전체 회사 인원은 정규직만 300 명 정도 좀 넘고, 계약직도 1.5 배 정도

그건 회사 입사서 물어? * FWA users makes a difference in creating an on culture.
the number of history. ↳ FWA users

* 입사제정 상충, ~~해~~
장점들 / 가늘고 길게 long run
• 동지 갖고 컨셉을
확립하는 일이라.
컨셉 잡음;
WLB 전략
* 과장님과 자신의
다른 컨셉이 있고
↳ 육아 포기. 양육
* 공공기관;
임금지급
job security
* 직장에서 이왕지
대체할.

Sample Theme Table

| Interviewee 14. (시차출근제) | | |
|--|---|--|
| Emergent themes | Key Quotes | Reflections |
| <p>1. 자기 소개 및 회사 소개</p> <p><자기 소개></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">35 세, 결혼 5 년차, 4 년차의 엄마 (2,4 세 두 딸)"시다바리"엄마로서의 역할 (p. 3)<ul style="list-style-type: none">아이들에게 있어 절대적 보호자이자 존재아이케어와 집안일 모두 담당어린이아이기에 손이 많이 감아내로서의 역할:<ul style="list-style-type: none">전통적 아내 역할에 대한 인식을 하고 있지만 실제로 그렇게 하진 못할. <u>엄마이긴 하지만 아내는 없는 듯</u>.반대로, 아내로서 남편에게 받는 것도 없는 듯 ("평행선", p. 4) <p><전통적 성역할에 대한 인식: 가정, 사회에서의 남녀의 다른 역할, 사회적 통념></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">남편은 보조적 역할 (서포터): 직장일은 적극적이지만 집안일은본인의 지시에 따라 <u>수동적으로</u> 움직임 (잔소리 싫어서 본인이 하게 됨)본인의 커리어 개발을 위한 노력: 새벽에 영어학원본인도 <u>산악아도 남편을 breadwinnder role 을 수행해야 할 사람이라 규정하고 일관된 일에 몰두할 수 있는 환경을 제공하게끔 함</u> (비록 불만이 있지만)남편의 WLB 정도: 70 점<ul style="list-style-type: none">남편의 라이프 스타일 바꿈주어진 환경에서는 나름 최선을 다한다고 생각함 (-> 환경 탓이지 오롯이 남편 본인의 노력 여하는 아님; 변화의 driving force 존재) <p><회사 소개></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">이전 회사 (LG CNS): 대기업, 고연봉 (p. 6)<ul style="list-style-type: none">8 년간 다님, 파장 승진 후 다음 해 퇴사출산 후 <u>출퇴근 시간에 대한 문제 때문에 이직</u> (정시 퇴근 보장 안되고 야근, 주말 근무 아주 많았음)사기업에서 여성으로서 오래 다니기 위해 회사에 옮긴 적이 있음. 결혼 후에도 새벽 1-2 시까지 일했고 파장 승진 위한 실적을 보여 줬어야 했음.사회보장정보원: 현재 회사, 2013 년 4 월 22 일 입사하여 2.5 년 (정보연계부)<ul style="list-style-type: none">복지정책 시스템 관리하는 곳 (p. 5)2009 년 <u>반쪽한 실생기관</u> (인사, 급여 등 문제 산재)- 공공기관이라 상대적으로 일 적고 정년 보장 (job security) | <p>남편: helper at home, breadwinner</p> <p>애들이 있어서 나는 절대적인 존재인 거 같고, 나머지 <u>아빠는, 다 보조적인 역할인 거 같애</u> 애들한테는. 그만큼 나는 집에서 해야 할 일들이, 애들도 보살피야 하고 집안일도 해야 하고. <u>남편은 항상 서포터지 메인은 아니라는</u> 생각을 한다. (3) ... 남편은 회사에서는 일을 하면 언제 쉼을 하고 그런 스케줄이 정해져 있고 (본인이 적극적으로) 행동하는데, 집에 와서는 내가 시켜야지 움직여. 나는 항상 시키게 되고 남편이 그럴 거부하진 않지만 <u>수동적</u>이야. 나는 <u>능동적</u>이고, 근데 다행히 남편이 따라주니까, 자연스럽게 세일이 흘러가니까 남편은 듣고 행동하는게 익숙해져 있는 거 같고. 서로 그렇게 돼버린 거 같아서 안타깝지. 나도 말하기 전에 해줬으면 좋겠는데, 그렇게 싫어서 내가 한다.... 지금 손이 많이 가는 건 애들이 아직 어리니까 그래서 더 집안일이면 더 그런 거 같애. (3)</p> <p>오후는 지금 영어학원을 다니거든, 그래서 6 시 전에 나가. 이것도 불만이야. 나는 근데 그걸, 나도 학원 다니고 싶고 다닐 수 있어. 나는 근데, 막말로, 내가 회사를 그만 두려면 애들이 문제라면 그만 둘 수도 있잖아. <u>당장 그만둘 사람은 나잖아</u>. 그래서 내가 회사의 정책을 알고 싶고 큰일을 할 생각은 없어. 적당히 내 선에서 욕먹지 않을 만큼만 일하면 돼. ... 근데 만약 내가 일을 그만 두면 <u>오후는 일을 계속 해야 되는 사람인데라고</u> 나는 규정 없고, <u>오후가 영어든 뭐든 커리어에 도움이 된다면 해야 된다고</u> 생각은 해. <u>그런 머리로 이해하는 거고</u>, 나도 하고 싶지만 오후는 항상 얘기해, 나도 같이 했으면 좋겠다고, 근데 이게 말이 되는 소리냐고 나는 그런 말을 듣는 것도 짜증이 나. 그런 말이 되는 소리를 하니까, 애들은 누가 보냐고 (p. 4)</p> <p>그런 통념상 그런데, 옛날 세대에 비해서 남편이 굉장히 많이 도와줘. 근데 이게 항상 도와주는 거지 남편이 메인이라고 아직 내 머리 속에는 안 박혀 있는 거 같애. 집안일도 내가 해야 되는 일인데 남편이 도와주니 고맙다. 나는 일찍 가는 건 당연한 거고 남편이 일찍 와주니 고맙다 다 이런 식이 되는 거라. 그 말인 즉, 기본으로 가정에서의 역할은 나고 사회의 중심은 남편이 더 크다고 봤을 때 나랑 둘 중에 육아 때문에 그만 두어야 한다면 남편이랑 나 둘 중에 내가 그만 두는게 맞고, <u>사회적인 통념상</u> 일을 하는게 맞지 않을까 그렇게 생각하는데, 그리고 내가 일을 그만 두고 집에 있는게 크게 불만스러울 거 같진 않아. 물론 일 하고 싶기도 하겠지만, 상대적으로 남편은 일을 그만 두고 육아만 전담했을 때 만족도는 굉장히 떨어질 거 같애. 결과적으로 가정에 좋지 않을 거 같고, 선택을 한다면 내가 (그만두는게) 낫다는 거지. (p. 12)</p> <p>남편의 WLB 정도</p> <p>오후도 70 프로 이상은 하는 거 같애. 오후도 원래 굉장히 야행성이었어. 일본 갔다와서 화 바뀌었는데 어차피 애들 자야 되는 거 아니까 일찍 자고 아침에는 영어학원 다니거든. 아침 시간 쓰고 회사가고 회사 일찍 간 만큼 일찍 퇴근하려고 하고. 내가 밥하고 준비하는 동안에 애 봐주고 씻기고 하다가 보니까. 물론 오후가 애 보는 걸 중요하게 생각 안하면, 스스로 균형이 아니라고 생각하겠지만 오후도 그런 사람은 아니니까. 그 정도는 하지 않을까. 어쨌든 주어진 환경에서 그보다 더 하기 쉽지 않겠지.</p> <p>복지부 산하 공공기관, 가족친화적 기업 선정</p> <p>여기는 복지부 산하기관이기 때문에 복지부의 의사결정을 굉장히 많이 따라야 하고 눈치를 많이 봐. 업무를 진행하는데 있어서 복지부의 승인을 받아야 될 때가 많다. (2)</p> <p>복지부에 대한 의사결정을 받아서 진행을 해야 하고 복지부가 이래라 저래라 하는 거에 따라야 하는 입장이 강하기 때문에 말도 많았지만 결국 우리가 독립적인 기관이 되고자 하고 있지만 아직은 복지부 눈치를 많이 본다는 거. 힘이 약하다는 거 그렇게 일찍으로 있지. 근데 <u>공공기관이다 보니까 복지 정책, 예를 들어 워킹맘을 위한 일차적 정책이라든가</u> <u>그런게 나오면 의무적으로라도 시행하는 용내라고 내야 하는 거라</u>. 제도가 만들어지면 한 명이라도 이용하는 사람이 생겨, <u>실사 눈치</u>가 보이더라도, 누군가는 이용해. 그런 면에서는 나쁘지 않고, 여기가 여성가족부가 선정한 가족친화적인 기업이라고 상 받았어. 물론 서로 나눠먹기 식일 수도 있겠지만 그런 면에 있어서는 나쁘지 않다. <u>시차출근제도 싫어하는 사람은 싫어하겠지만 어쨌든 낯자들 많이 이용하시거든</u>. 그런 거 가지고 문제하지 않아. 필요로는. (p. 7)</p> <p><u>그런 기회를 주는 환경이기 때문에 나쁘지 않다고</u> 본다 여기가. 아무런 대기업이라도 그런 정책을 쓰기가 쉽지 않다. 대부분 다 나라에서 하라고 하니까 (그 정책을) 시키겠지만 조직문화라는게 쉽게 안 바뀐다. 정말 안 바뀐다. 그래서 눈치 많이 보이겠지. (p. 7)</p> | <p>* 집안일과 아이 케어를 전담하며 일을 하고 있는 워킹맘이다. (primary caregiver) 본인 일에 대해서는 적극적으로 집안일에 있어서는 수동적인 남편에 대해 불만이 있지만 집안의 평화를 위해 본인이 주로 집안일을 담당하고 있다. 본인도 <u>사실이기도 남편을 breadwinnder role 을 수행해야 할 사람이라 규정하고 일관된 일에 몰두할 수 있는 환경을 제공하게끔 하고 있다</u> (비록 불만이 있지만).</p> <p>남편에게 불만이 있지만 본인이 느끼는 남편의 WLB 노력 정도는 70 점으로 생각보다 높다. 그녀는 <u>남편이 주어진 환경에서는 나름 최선을 다하고 있다고</u> 생각한다. 이는 다시 말해, <u>조직, 사회</u> 환경 및 구조 탓이지 오롯이 남편 본인의 노력 여하는 아니라는 것임; 변화의 driving force 찾아볼 수 있는 부분이다.</p> <p>* 복지부 산하기관이라 복지부 의사결정 및 정책 등에 영향을 많이 받음</p> |